The Penitent

By Edna Worthley Underwood

Alexander I, Tsar of Russia during the Napoleonic era, and Pushkin, the famous Russian poet, are the chief figures in this epic novel, first volume of a trilogy that will picture the crumbling of a great civilization beginning in the Napoleonic era and ending with the present day.

Implicated in a revolutionary plot, Pushkin is thrust into exile, and we follow his extraordinary wanderings through the Ukraine, Crimea, and Caucasus. It is a picture of Russia such as not even a Russian author has before attempted, a panorama of a chaotic age and strange lands, gay with color and vibrant with life. Meanwhile at Petersburg, intrigue reigns; the Tsar is betrayed by the woman he loves, his good intentions are thwarted by his courtiers, and, like the master of a puppet show, Metternich, arch enemy of freedom, twitches — through his favorite spy, the bewitching and seductive Châli — the strings that guide these gorgeous figures to the final dramatic climax.

$2.00

BOOKS BY ANNE DOUGLAS SEDGWICK

ADRIENNE TONER

"A very great and significant book, a most important event in English and American letters. . . . Among the first of the honest studies in fiction of American women." — *Zona Gale.*

CHRISTMAS ROSES

"There is no artist writing short stories to-day who can approach her in the uncanny faculty for conveying the situation that is unconveyable, for suggesting the emotional reaction that cannot be put into words, and for making real before our bewildered eyes the whole subjective content of the lives of her characters in their delicately balanced human relationships." — *New York Herald.*

THE THIRD WINDOW

"An absorbingly interesting psychological drama! The characters are drawn with deftness, delicacy, and skill. The book is beautifully written, in a style at once clear and subtle, and all the values are finely maintained." — *New York Times.*

THE PENITENT

By

Edna Worthley Underwood

REFERENCE LIBRARY * HOUGHTON MIFFLIN CO. * BOSTON, MASS.
Archive
Collection

This book may not leave the Offices
and if borrowed must be returned within 7 days

THE PENITENT

IS VOLUME ONE OF

THE NEW WORLD TRILOGY

THE OTHERS TO FOLLOW ARE:

THE PASSION FLOWER AND THE PAGEANT-MAKER

THE PENITENT

THE PENITENT

BY

EDNA WORTHLEY UNDERWOOD

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1922

COPYRIGHT, 1922, BY EDNA WORTHLEY UNDERWOOD

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE · MASSACHUSETTS
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

TO

CALVIN THOMAS

Dedicated to the late Professor Calvin Thomas, late head of the department of Teutonic Languages and Literatures, Columbia University, New York City, to whom first this initial idea of *The New World Trilogy*—three novels—picturing the crumbling of the great civilization of the past was submitted and which he was kind enough to commend.

Once my teacher; always my friend; and to the world at large a noble example of broad and accurate scholarship.

"*Er* [*Alexander*] *war seit dem dreizehnten März 1801, vom Bewusztsein der ihm drückenden Mitschuld am Todte des Vaters, ein Büszer geworden, der nach den Heilsmitteln und nach den Heiligengottes suchte, die ihm den Last abnehmen sollten.*"

SCHIEMANN

(TRANSLATION)

"*Since the thirteenth of March, 1801, Alexander, because of the oppressive consciousness of his guilt in the murder of his father, had become* a penitent, *who sought the means of healing, the Holy God, to take the burden away.*"

SCHIEMANN

"Modern history knows no more tragic figure than Alexander."

Encyclopædia Britannica

"The necessities of politics are the proper motive for modern tragedy."

NAPOLEON THE FIRST

CONTENTS

I.	The Meeting	3
II.	Alexander and Elizabeth	34
III.	The Journey South	60
IV.	Alexander and his Daughter	76
V.	The Duel	90
VI.	The Night Vigil	105
VII.	Pushkin and Count Woronzow	116
VIII.	The Art Exhibit	127
IX.	Dawn on the Ackermann Steppe	143
X.	By the Gulf of Finland	159
XI.	Odessa	171
XII.	Madam Woronzow	181
XIII.	Metternich	195
XIV.	Crimea and the Garden of a Khan	215
XV.	A Dinner-Party by the Gulf of Finland	229
XVI.	Caucasia	242
XVII.	Alexander	251
XVIII.	The Return	262
XIX.	Mikhailovsky	277

XX. The Decision 285
XXI. The Farewell 303
XXII. Taganrog 312
XXIII. Count Woronzow 318
XXIV. Orchids and Music 327
XXV. Kusmitch the Monk 341
XXVI. The News 350
XXVII. Prince Metternich's Letter 363
XXVIII. The Penitent 366

THE PENITENT

THE PENITENT

CHAPTER I

THE MEETING

"THESE meetings are getting to be a bore!" thought Alexis Sergiewitch Pushkin, concealing his yawning mouth hurriedly, and glancing about at the same time to see if any one had observed his indifference.

He would not have come to-night, probably, this petted dandy of the world of fashion, if it had not been a special meeting, and if the members had not insisted vigorously that his presence was necessary. Besides, to-night the leading members of the Southern Society, from Moscow, were here too, and his absence would have been in the nature of a discourtesy.

It was easy enough for him, the petted darling of Petersburg's smart set, to believe that his presence was necessary. Was he not sought by the élite? Who was more popular? He was the spoiled child of the fashionable crowd who was beginning to think that he had been made for people to compliment, to caress. In addition, Ryleiev had asked him to come and in a manner that he felt to be significant. He liked Ryleiev. He did not wish to displease him. They were sympathetic. They were old friends. And Ryleiev was a poet like himself, but — of course — not such an important one. Did he not have reason to believe that he was the only real poet in Russia? Was not that what people said?

Ryleiev was the host to-night too. He had procured permission, for the occasion, to use one of the empty upstairs counting-rooms of the Russian-American Company, for which he had been working since he had given up his unpleasant position with the

Criminal Court whose procedures had spread before his mind such an unhappy comprehension of injustice, of misrule, that he was saddened. This was on the Moïka. Ryleiev, who was married, lived right next door, in a small, four-roomed, wooden house, likewise owned by the Russian-American Company, from the front door of which you could look out and see the Blue Bridge.

Alexis Sergiewitch, be it said, did not fancy greatly this plebeian quarter. And least of all to-night! He looked about the bare, ugly room, where men spent their lives in prosaic work instead of pleasure, with a suppressed *frisson* of distaste. A large, awkward, oblong table was in the center. It was covered with green oilcloth, stamped with raised red and blue flowers. There were yellow-painted wooden armchairs with low, round backs; some high, narrow desks with tall, long-legged stools; unpainted pillars of wood supporting the low, none too clean, ceiling. The cheap candles that lighted the room had not been cleaned for so long they looked as if they were encrusted with ice, or had been through a gray snowstorm. Alexis Sergiewitch hated everything that savored of discipline; discomfort, or shabby living.

By force of contrast with the ugly present, and its atmosphere of compulsion and of toil, he recalled the night before. He had spent it with one of Petersburg's loveliest women. What fun the smuggling him in had been! He chuckled now at thought of it. How well he had acted his part, too, that of messenger from the fashionable modiste, Marcelle, bringing home late a gown! At the recollection he looked down upon his slim, elegant figure with approval. Then the luxurious, satin-hung, violet-perfumed room, with its profusion of flowers, and its seductive inmate, swung before the eyes of his brain and shut out the ugly present.

"Why don't you pay attention?"

Kakhovsky of the deep-set, treacherous eyes and brutal face nudged him roughly, discourteously. This vexed him. He was particularly sensitive to discourtesy.

Kakhovsky was a Pole, a gentleman by birth, he claimed, who had gambled away his estates, and who was envious of men with money, or who were better placed socially than himself. He had the manners of a boor, and Alexis Sergiewitch hated him. He

hated him also because he was ugly to look at, and offended his sensitive poet's eyes. Kakhovsky had a huge, protruding under lip, that hung down and made him look like an animal, a sort of hog's jowl. His voice was rough, harsh. He had a mean, high-tempered face. And he was shabbily dressed and looked dirty. He looked like anything but the gentleman he claimed to be.

At the other end of the room they were crowding around Ryleiev mysteriously. They were whispering. There was an air of suspense and secrecy about them. Kakhovsky seemed to understand. But he, Alexis Sergiewitch, did not. Kakhovsky evidently was in the secret. But he would not tell. He watched them intently for a moment with his little, twinkling, evil, pig eyes, as if he knew just what they were saying. Then, without addressing young Pushkin, or as if with intention to ignore him, he sauntered jauntily over to join them.

Alexis Sergiewitch noticed, wearily, that to-night a light that resembled inspiration shone in the great, sad, beautiful eyes of Ryleiev, and the refractory brown curl that stood up on the top of his head was bobbing briskly. His somewhat frail body looked frailer than usual, too, he thought. He was nervous and restless.

Ryleiev, however, always dressed atrociously, in the worst taste, affecting bright-colored plaid vests, huge, showy scarf-pins, and his coat looked as if it had been made for some one else. But his head, which would be noticed in any assembly, was a poet's head. This made Alexis Sergiewitch remember the poem "Voinarovsky" which Ryleiev had just written, and had dedicated to the elegant Alexander Bestushew, the friend he loved, the dark, sensitive, boyish figure that was now standing beside him. Certain lines floated without volition through his memory. It was poetry. He enjoyed it. He could not forget it. There was no doubt about it. Ryleiev was a poet.

Prince Odojewsky, blond, slender, aristocratic, the petted darling of his mother and the social élite, and like himself only twenty, slipped supplely from a tall stool, beside a dirty, guttering candle, and lounged slowly toward the others. Odojewsky was charmingly frivolous and frail to look upon. He was a picture worthy of a painter. He was pretty as girls are pretty, and

young. He was finely enough dressed to attract comment. He had a waist so slender two hands could clasp it, contrasting sharply with the long, full flare of his black broadcloth coat. His shirt and the dramatic, Byronic swathing of his neck were of the finest cambric from Marseilles. Like young men of fashion of the day, he was tightly corseted, and his blond hair was brushed out daringly into the middle of his cheek on each side, where it swirled around like a yellow rosette.

The brothers Mouravieff-Apostol were aristocrats too, like young Prince Odojewsky. But like Ryleiev they were older, a little, than the others and they had both fought in the war with France. Their father, who had been the childhood friend of Alexander, the Emperor, and his playmate in the imperial palace, and had shared likewise with him his careful classical education, was not only a great gentleman, after the courtly standard of the past, but a Greek scholar of repute, and a philologist. He lived in Florence now, in a luxurious, old, yellowing palace of Italian marble, devoting his life to the study of Greek and Roman art. He had translated Aristophanes into Russian, and now he was writing elegant if insipid verse, in the noble tongue of Greece. Here in the proud, picturesque, Italian city, away from his own untutored, rougher race, living in a luxury that was regal, the accredited friend of princes and emperors, he was dreaming his days away, like the patrician he was, over the perished poets of antiquity. He was a figure, in short, such as only the highly specialized life of a brief period, its leisure, its barely touched wealth, could create.

He bore proudly an ancient name: Mouravieff, ancient nobles of Russia; and Apostol, the revolutionary hetman of the Ukraine who dared to defy Peter the Great, and who in the end won his admiration. But none of this restless, warlike blood had come down to him, the scholar, the exquisite, the lonely sybarite of beauty. It had skipped him and become the perilous heritage, in a perilous period, of his two tall, handsome sons, who were arguing now with such evident zest with Ryleiev, as Alexis Sergiewitch stood idly watching them. Alexis Sergiewitch had no interest in this conversation which he could see was growing more

and more animated, even to the point of resembling dissension. They were just literary societies, anyway! What could any of them tell him about art, about letters? He smiled disdainfully at the thought. He wished again that he had not come. He did not feel that he belonged in these amateurish, schoolboy debates. Besides, they bored him.

The brothers Mouravieff-Apostol had both been in the Napoleonic wars, those epoch-making wars, which had created a new, a dangerous sense of fellowship among men, and had scattered bright firebrands of discordant thought throughout a continent. They had been attached to the staff of Field Marshal Wittgenstein, of the Second Army Corps. Pestel, as it happened, a German by name but a Russian by blood, had been there too. He, in fact, because of a peculiar stern ability, had been made aid-de-camp to Prince Wittgenstein. These three were the initial founders of the two societies which were meeting in joint session to-night. The idea had been at first the result of a need of diversion in the black, lonely, unenlivened nights they had spent together upon the battle-fields, when they were huddled together in the discomfort of rain, of snow; merely a glittering, fanciful dream to entertain their brains and make the slow hours go more quickly. Then, boyishly enough, they had planned together the remaking of their country. And Pestel, who had been most serious, most interested from the beginning, had even gone so far as to write, laboriously, a new code of laws, which he was convinced, because of a certain self-reliance which was his, an untutored conceit, was what Russia needed and would cure her social ills.

The three saw and agreed upon various points of weakness in the existing social structure. One was that there were only two classes of people in the land; the one so few, the other so many, and the distance between them was too great for safety. It made them useless, in a way, to each other. It was a source of weakness, of not easily defined loss. The aristocrats, in minority; and the rough, unmoulded mass of unlettered peasants who could neither read nor write. It was this, at first, that the young men hoped to change. This, they believed, created unrest, dissatis-

faction. This was a breaking spot which needed strengthening. There must be some kind of leveling, some kind of filling in.

Sergius Mouravieff-Apostol had at length been promoted. He had been made lieutenant-colonel. And he filled the office with the dignity, with the pride that became his ancient race. It had been the lot of his race always to command, not obey. With him therefore it was an inherited instinct, and he did it well.

He was a distinguished, tall, resolute, blond figure, well fitted to lead. His brother, Ataman, younger, was less determined, less aggressive. He was of gentler mould. He looked the artist he was not. There was some indefinable quality in his face that was appealing. He had the sensitive, trembling mouth of a child. They were both aristocrats and they looked it. They belonged to *his world*, and Alexis Sergiewitch looked upon them kindly.

But Pestel, who was talking with them now so earnestly, he did not like. Pestel was considerably older than the others. His hair was beginning in places to turn gray. He was over thirty. His face was yellow like a Chinaman's, with dull, small, black, cruel eyes set too far apart; eyes which were peculiarly expressionless, unless he was moved to anger, when they took on a deep, slow, sullen, coal-like glow. He dressed showily and badly. His figure was unpleasant because his right shoulder was considerably higher than the left. He was small and a little too slight of build, but wiry. And he possessed great endurance. He had won a medal, indeed, for bravery in the campaign of 1812. His nature, however, was hard, cruel. He had little heart. And he came by the lack of it honestly. His father had been the most savage, brutal governor that Siberia had had. In that pale, barren land-strip, reaching out to touch the far Pacific, he had made tears fall like rain. His name, in that lonely land, had been a synonym for sorrow. Within the son, too, could be felt something that resembled steel, that could not be made to bend; something determined, resisting, beyond the normal.

The high-pitched, dictatory voice of Pestel now floated over to where he stood. It was angry. It was harsh and argumentative. It overrode the voices of the others and bore them down brutally.

"I came back from abroad, from France, with new ideas, new points of view, ambitions, just like all the other soldiers," he declared dictatorially.

"We Russians, hundreds, thousands of us, had bought with our suffering, our life-blood, the freedom of Europe. We came home with a feeling of victory, of freedom. Were we not the petted soldiers of a triumphing, a fêted army? We came back eager for the reward which we had earned. Did we not have a right to it, my friends, I ask you?

"We came home, I repeat, to take possession of the advantages which belonged to us because we had paid for them. We had bought them with our blood. And what do we find when we get here? That there is nothing for us. Alexander, the Emperor, has changed. We can no longer recognize in him the leader we used to know. He has broken his promises. He no longer cherishes those noble dreams of youth which were ours — *and his* — together. Suddenly, he is old — disillusioned, strange. We cannot understand him! He has thrown over his happy, broad-minded plans for freedom, for enlightenment. The ideals, the hopes, which were once his have now passed on to his people, out of his reach, out of his guidance. He is terrified, we learn, at the spirit of liberalism, of *modernism*, sweeping over the country, which he himself helped to start. He can only condescend, it seems. He cannot treat with equals.

"What does he do for us after our return from the battlefield? How does he repay us for our blood? What is his gratitude for our suffering? He turns that hell-hound Arakcheiev loose upon us. He doubles the number of his spies. He doubles his guard. He gives us over to that stiff-necked drill-master, Count Benkendorf, who inaugurates the baseness of the paid denunciation. He lets that mad priest, Photius, dictate, who has just the grade of intelligence of a wolf.

"And what do we soldiers get for our reward? Tell me! *This!* In his military colonies, presided over by Arakcheiev, we are knouted to death. The officers who brought glory, who brought distinction to Russia, are dishonored, or dismissed. Dismissed, I tell you, without anything to live upon. Dismissed to starve, or to become beggars in the street.

"Revolution is loose in the world. Why should not we, too, profit by it? Have we not every justification to do so? What else, my friends, is there left to do? Alexander is not what we thought him in the old days. He has changed, most unaccountably. Instead of being the inspired leader of men we used to think him, he is a tricky Byzantine.

"In addition, he is forgetting Russia in his eagerness for a greater part, a world part. In his longing to make calm, to make happy again the continent which Napoleon upset, he has neglected us. In trying to do everything he has done nothing. We are forgotten — I tell you!

"The first few months that followed the invasion of the Little Corsican, and the end of the war with him, found Petersburg gay, to be sure, as you and I remember, and the scene of an exaggerated social display. I grant you it was a brief period of happiness. It was a period of enterprise, of rich and varied activity. We hoped a new era had begun. Poets, who need little encouragement at any time, began to pipe up, just like birds when the year is young, and in rich contrast, I can tell you, to the gloomy years of war preceding. Joy swept back to reinvigorate a world that had grown sad with suffering. Russia was a good place to live in then.

"*But it did not last!* Alexander changed. He would not let it last! Why, no one knows, unless it was that which rules cowards, *fear*. He denied everything he used to champion. He gave up his friends. He became the weak slave of an abandoned woman, who cannot even count her lovers."

Alexis Sergiewitch began to shake off his weariness.

"You who did not go to the war, because you were too young," chimed in Sergius Mouravieff-Apostol, in a dignified manner, without anger, a man's manner, which carried a conviction of its own, "do not know, from personal experience, the truth of what our brother, Pestel here, has just been saying. The men of old Russia, our fathers, hated new France, and the Revolution."

At this moment, Alexis Sergiewitch, always at heart the aristocrat, thought: "What a relief to such boredom as this tonight, and to the crudeness, the rough ugliness of a land like ours,

was the gay spirit of pleasure, of highly developed living of old France! What a thing to hold in memory, as an earnest of the possibilities of man, was that polished race that had made life fearless, finished, and at the same time so luxurious" — a vision of the petted beauty of the night before occurring to him as an example.

"They, our fathers, adored the France of Versailles. That is of the past, we know. It is dead. Nothing like it can come again. A new world has been born, my brothers, born upon the battle-field where worlds have before been born, around the cannons of the Conqueror. The travail of the birth of civilizations is the boom of cannons."

A silence, just such as the mysterious wind spreads over water, followed this statement, and Mouravieff-Apostol paused an instant to enjoy it and to judge of its effect.

"After such a great war as ours, my brothers, not only are the minds of living men different, but it may be the recent dead beyond are tugging at us. You cannot easily make a list of the powers that war unleashes." A pause longer and more dramatic followed.

"What did we Russians get from that old France that is dead? What did we get, I ask you? Nothing but demoralization! A demoralization of heart, of mind — that has been steadily going on — poisoning the sincere impulses of our natures. Dissipated French *émigrés*, fleeing basely to us for refuge, in 1796, from the vengeance of the onrushing Revolution, fleeing from the logical consequences of their own lives, came here to act as our teachers, to bring up our children, to train them in the pernicious vices of decadent France. Upon our youthful, honest, unsophisticated race, just coming into sight upon the horizon of history, there was set that old age of the mind, of the emotions, which are a part of decaying France. We became dissipated before we had lived. We paid a debt which we had not incurred —"

"*Wait!* — I tell you. There is something to be said upon the other side. You are dealing, like most orators, in half truths."

Alexis Sergiewitch was glad of this interruption. He began to

pay attention. Prince Viazemsky was not only a friend of his, but a poet, too. He wondered what he was going to say.

"That old world of Versailles, of corrupt, if you will, but still of magnificent manners, was, in a way, the world's standard of excellence, of a certain kind. It measured the greatest distance between the savage and the civilized. It measured the distance man has traveled from the brutal past. Poets, artists, even thinkers, will continue to regard it with delight. It was something perfect of its kind, something good to remember, the height, perhaps, of the white race, that will with difficulty be reached again. And you cannot reproach them with weakness, you who boast so willingly of having fought in the wars, or with enervation, or cowardice, these old French nobles, because few have been able to meet death as they met it. They danced smiling, with gay gestures of farewell, from the minuets of Mozart to the guillotine, keeping step with pleasure —"

"*Sh — sh — sh! sh — sh!*" The last sentence was drowned in hisses. Prince Viazemsky was forced to take his seat and leave the rest unsaid. But his words had not been ineffective. Viazemsky's tongue seldom missed its mark. It could sting like a bee.

Kakhovsky, with a head that just now resembled a wild bull, jumped up. He hated Prince Viazemsky for his social position, his distinction, and his attitude of aristocratic disdain.

"You are only an artist — *a poet!*" he exclaimed with scorn. "You cannot appreciate anything but pleasure. I wish to inform you, my princely friend, that that is over — no matter what you say or think — the few controlling the many. It will not come again. The heads of kings and emperors are not fastened too securely to their shoulders these days. You know it as well as I do. They must go, all of them! And I, for one, am glad of it. They cannot go too soon.

"After them — the nobility. And then, in time, the rich man, too, must go. This is the logical progression. This is the bottom of the long, steep, icy hill of descent down which we are sliding. In the new world that is coming there will be no free birth tickets to unearned seats. In this new world," he added

solemnly, and with something that almost resembled reverence, "which our brother, Sergius Mouravieff-Apostol, just told us had been born upon the battle-field, by the light of the camp-fires of the Conqueror, in this new world which Napoleon was bold enough to plunder of its old-fashioned, its trite ideals, its unfair finenesses, *the few cannot control the many.*

"Why, I ask you, should they who create what the rich squander, the *producers*, be despised? They are the mainstay of life. To the trained mind, the scientific mind, nothing can be despised. We have been subjected long enough to the folly of the few so-called *chosen ones* who rule. The miracle is that such subjection should have lasted through the centuries. It could only be successful through the world's undeveloped youth, its period of swashbuckling, unreasoning romance. But the slower the awakening of the people, the greater its reserve of momentum. It will become the irresistible force. Not much longer can it be controlled. The period of *realism* has come."

"What a strange turn affairs are taking to-night," thought Alexis Sergiewitch, who had expected to hear read the latest poetic effusions of his companions. "Are they mad? How intently they are listening, too, the others! It is as if there were some secret, some agreed-upon *coup* in reserve."

His eyes swept the group before him. Maximilian Klinger, the German poet, the spy, who had been in the Russian army and who was leaving on the morrow for his home, was here. Why was he here to-night, unless to report, like the base tattler he was, what was said in order to make trouble? His somewhat square head unwaveringly faced the speaker. He did not intend to miss a word. He was storing it up greedily.

Behind Klinger stood Adam Mickiewicz, the Polish poet and patriot, now in exile in Petersburg. For an instant the sensitive eyes of Pushkin were arrested by the striking beauty of the face of Mickiewicz. There was something in the expression, the eloquent pallor, the contour of the head, which resembled the ideal which Titian and Veronese, in the great days of Italian art, had attempted to give to the head of Christ; a haunting combination of nobility and dramatic grace.

In another group slightly to the right of the excited, noisy speaker, was young Bestushew-Rjumin, a distant relative of the Great Chancellor of the days of Catherine the Second; a graceful, aristocratic youth of genius who wore his clothes with distinction. He was a figure to be noticed in any crowd. He was poet, story-teller, goldsmith, artist, and accomplished man of the world; Prince Odojewsky, Prince Troubetskoi, and young Baratinsky. The latter was young, handsome, a poet, with the dark, eloquent face of an Asiatic which race he resembled. He was a fashionable, attractive figure. He possessed a peculiar, persistent charm. And he was almost a rival of Alexis Sergiewitch in the favor of the ladies.

The eyes of the Polish poet, Mickiewicz, looked back occasionally at the weary Pushkin, and at length a spark of interest brightened them. He began to think, with the accustomed scorn of his haughty, but treacherous race: "He looks to-night just what he is, a little, frail, faded, yellow negro!" This judgment was soon corrected by an opposing impression, that young Pushkin had something of the changeableness of a chameleon, because he recalled just now, too, having seen him when he was a figure of astonishing distinction. He was not easy to judge, evidently. He was not all upon the surface to see at any one moment like a display of cheap goods in a small shop.

Alexis Sergiewitch was slender, of medium height, but supple and strong, because he was one of the skilled swordsmen of the time. He had light hair, so curly it was woolly and betrayed his negro blood. His eyes were blue-gray, sparkling and intelligent, but the white showed too conspicuously. His long, thin nose was noticeably flattened at the end in a manner not characteristic of the white race. The expression of his face held something alien, un-European.

He had long, strong, white teeth that shone extraordinarily. But the remarkable thing about his face was that it had no eyebrows. His figure, however, was superb. He could not be called, perhaps, what is understood by handsome, but he did not look like any one else. He was strikingly individual. He was unique, as alien combinations are sometimes unique; and he possessed a

peculiar, supple charm both of physical movement and mind. About him, too, there was an indefinable air of conscious power, something poignantly different, which sometimes was the cause of irritating a new acquaintance.

Mickiewicz bent hastily to the ear of Klinger. He whispered, not without malice: "I am beginning to think our fashionable, petted Pushkin, over there, *as a poet*, possesses merely charm — and not depth." Here he smiled significantly and noted the effect of his words upon Klinger. "Liberty, the freedom of man, do not mean anything to him. Why — he does not even know what the words mean!" warming to the subject, because Klinger looked sympathetic. "They are just new toys for his amusement — new, fleeting enthusiasms — which he thinks are fashionable."

Klinger, who was envious of Pushkin's quickly acquired reputation, nodded hastily in agreement.

Such an adverse, whispered decision as this had never before been uttered in Petersburg, where Pushkin happened to be the fashion. And Klinger, by his quick approval, contented himself with thinking that Mickiewicz might possibly set something disagreeable going with such opinions, after he, Klinger, had returned to Germany. He ended by wondering why Pushkin, that luxurious sybarite, who seldom had a free evening, was here at all to-night.

Sergius Mouravieff-Apostol was now nodding commandingly toward his younger brother, Ataman, for the purpose of stimulating him to play a part, since with himself and Pestel, he was one of the originators of the two societies, the Northern and the Southern, which were meeting in joint session to-night. Ataman was disinclined evidently, for some reason, to follow his brother's repeated command. He still hesitated. At length, being unable longer to resist the older brother, whom he was accustomed to obey, he arose slowly, unwillingly.

"We know that in his youth Alexander had liberal ideas — but his will was weak. In that perhaps he was just a Russian like the rest of us. We make plans — *vast plans* — but we do not execute them." He would have said "*which are impossible to*

execute" had he not feared the disapproval of his sterner brother, who was watching him narrowly. "The making of plans evidently satisfied him. We must not be like him."

"*Hear! Hear! Hear!*" Noisy applause all but swept the timid, youthful speaker off his feet. Encouraged a little, he went on more bravely.

"Our Russian mind, my good friends, is too much like the land we live in. It is vast — and it has not been subjected, sufficiently, to cultivation. It lacks map-making, charting — sure highways. We must be different. We must know where we are going. There must be ahead of us some well-defined termination."

"*Hear! Hear! Hear!*"

"Because of his sensitive and not particularly strong nature," thought Alexis Sergiewitch with disapproval, who was now beginning to pay attention to what was said, "he is merely the mouthpiece through which the others are speaking. These are no convictions of his. It is a sort of hypnotism. And it is a damned shame to make him do it. He does not belong here. He is as much out of place as I am, or — Baratinsky."

But young Mouravieff-Apostol was still continuing.

"The entire world is aflame for liberty. It is not only we, the isolated Russians. Revolution is loose among men. Our time has come!"

"Is he crazy?" thought Alexis Sergiewitch. "What in the name of common sense does he think he is doing!"

But Mouravieff, under the compelling eyes of his brother, was keeping steadily on.

"Why should we be behind the rest of the world? Long ago we ceased to be nomads, mere, unknown, wandering Asiatics, carrying our tents upon our backs, footing it from place to place, out of touch with the rest of the white race. The chosen ones, the thinkers, of every land are now preaching liberty, the equality of man. We are no longer ignorant, hesitating pathfinders. But we are not playing the part of leaders that we should. In this new, important, man-saving movement, which means the coming of a different civilization, Russia is inert, uninspired, and still sleeps on amid the dreams of the past —"

"*Aye! Aye! Aye!* — and Russia should lead instead of follow," thundered Ryleiev, leaping to his feet excitedly and unceremoniously thrusting young Mouravieff-Apostol aside.

"Russia, my brothers, should lead! Russia is the greatest nation of them all! What other can compare with it? Only that dim, polar star, our neighbor in space and the Arctic night, can measure its vastness. It is both Europe and Asia. It is both North and South. It is likewise of the world of the ancient, immemorial East, with its prayer, patient pilgrimage, its spirituality, and, at the same time, of the new, material, pessimistic West.

"What does our land not embrace? What other can equal it? Tell me! Then why should we, the rich by inheritance, follow dumbly the poor? Consider if you will be good enough. Does it not border upon the polar midnight where the prohibition of God passes: Here man may not dwell? And at the same time does it not reach unto the south where luxuriant summer invites? It is a combination of nature's most powerful opposites. That is why it is not easy to estimate. That is why it is not easy to understand.

"Its steppes are most barren, most disconcerting, and its mountains highest. Its rivers are most vast and lonely, and its unmarked mountains still unknown. There are no other plains on the face of the earth to compare with the plains of Russia. They can measure boundary to boundary with the African desert. They are spaces from which seas have been swept away, and vanished.

"In the South — it is a wild immensity, left just as the ice of glacial periods left it, keeping the unpeopled, lonely levels of its cosmic birth. The low country by the southern Volga, and to the east of it, is the bed of some ancient, primeval ocean man did not name nor know. From some just such gigantic space, perhaps, the moon was once torn out and then flung forth to light the night of space.

"In the North — a polar prairie, the tundra, treeless, almost grassless, reaching out to meet a polar water. The monotonous spaces have brought about certain peculiarities in our mental constitution. They have helped to make that difference which separates us from other Europeans."

"Another thing that has changed us is that we were shut off from the life of Europe in the past. Europe's history was not our history. But that is no reason why we should be shut off from its life of freedom, hope, progress in the present. These various influences, my brothers, and others which I will not pause to name, have contributed to a sense of loneliness, of loss. But we need not continue this life of isolation. We must not! Let nothing force us to do it! A part in the future must be ours.

"We missed, and therefore we have felt sadly the loss of that first inspired propaganda of the teachings of Christ, fresh from the lips of the Master. It did not reach us, in this vast, cold, lonely land, until it had been filtered through the dying splendor of Rome, the regretful glory of Greece, and, like a wanderer, at length, weary, paused to rest for a time in the City of Constantine. From there it spread slowly, across the Russian steppe. It came to us.

"We did not see the old pagan civilizations fall prostrate beneath it. We did not witness the magic of its coming nor the completeness of its triumph. It came to us when all this was over; but enriched, *perhaps*, for the soul, with a deeper pity, a new comprehension.

"We did not know either that realized spirit of Beauty, made visible for the longing eye of man a little while amid the confusing ways of earth, which was the counted days of Greece. And we did not know that eloquent coming to life again, in resonant Mediterranean lands rich with the past, that strange, belated living over again of the glad Greek genius, which was called the Italian Renaissance; that gorgeous period of sanity, of bloom, which came for a moment — with its blessed refreshment — after the pagan world was gone; that resurgence of the youth of man, with this addition — the gift of a soul.

"We did not know that ordered civic wisdom, that reasoned support and strengthening for questioning life and its problems, which had been distilled, as it were, through war, through conquest, from all the past, the concentrated wisdom of history which was the teaching of the Twelve Tables and Justinian Law.

"None of this came to us. But the separations, the prohibi-

tions can hold no longer. We will become one with the rest of the world. We will not only claim but hold our share."

Alexis Sergiewitch no longer leaned limply and indifferently against the red, wooden pillar, wishing the meeting were over and feeling disdainful. He was erect, intense. A new and surprising thought was creeping slowly into his brain, an illuminating thought. Perhaps he was not Russia's only man of genius after all, its only poet and chosen one. For the moment a feeling came over him that was new and not altogether pleasant. He felt small and insignificant. Ryleiev, evidently, was a poet with the inspiration of heroes and martyrs in his soul, while he, Alexis Sergiewitch, was only a petted poet of pleasure — of the roses and the wine. What were words of sportive elegance in comparison with such a faith as this!

Silence followed the outburst of Ryleiev, the silence that for a moment impresses itself upon men who are suddenly thrust without warning into the presence of something sacred.

Alexis Sergiewitch then made one of those sudden, supple mental changes, which were characteristic of him, and a frequent cause of misunderstanding among those who associated with him. Whatever people might say of him he was the generous-souled artist. He looked down now with eyes of love, sympathy, comprehension, and approval at Ryleiev, who he knew had surpassed him. In the depths of his nature he was generous and just. No one had found him niggardly.

At length Pestel, Ryleiev, Kakhovsky, and the elder Mouravieff-Apostol began to whisper together again significantly. When this whispered conference was at an end, Pestel took the place of the former speaker, and with a certain air of proud importance that was disagreeable, as if he were preparing to say something he had long planned to say and that he alone was fitted to say.

"We have played Hamlet long enough, my good friends. We have debated; *To be or not to be!* We have at length, I am proud to declare, reached a decision. That is why the two societies are in joint session to-night. For too long we have merely meditated. Now we know what *must be.* We must exterminate the

Romanoffs. *We must kill Alexander.* Thus only can our country live, be free."

Profound silence and no applause followed this statement. Evidently they had not all been informed. And the agreement was more than doubtful.

Alexis Sergiewitch left his place against the red, wooden pillar. He walked defiantly to the center of the room, in order to face them equally.

"God of our fathers! Are we scholars, I ask you? Are we gentlemen, seeking to help, to enlighten our land? Or are we criminals, murderers?" In an illuminating flash of mind he realized how he had been tricked into coming here to-night; how against his will he had been made a member of a criminal, secret conspiracy against the life of Alexander whom he loved. He had not only no interest in anything of this sort, but he was decidedly opposed to it. This harping about reform he detested. It was especially disagreeable to his nature. He hated nothing so much as the thought of a world of men busy in improving other men's morals. That was occupation for a reformer, not for a poet, an artist. Life was well enough as it was. He did not care whether people's morals were good or bad. He cared only for the bright pageantry which life and its movements spread before his artist's eyes, its resolving into eloquent, fluent lines. He enjoyed the pictures of living. He loved color, form, instead of morals. In this mental occupation with which he busied himself he did not relish being limited by anything, least of all by *reform*, which to him was synonymous with vulgarity, with dullness.

"You condemn Alexander, our Emperor, wrongly," he began in a voice of forced calm because he was trembling with anger — "more, unintelligently. Your outlook is narrow. You persist in seeing only half. He has done all that is humanly possible, in the time given him, with the wars, too, with which he has had to contend, to improve our country. He is doing it all the time. The age just now is difficult. You ought to know this, you who pose to know so much, you who went to the war. It is one of great, of varied activity — change — uncertainty — "

"Sh — sh! Sh — sh — sh!"

Hisses for a moment silenced him. Then Kakhovsky demanded, in a voice in which he did not trouble to conceal both scorn and contempt:

"What do poets know? You are a poet."

Controlling himself with effort, Pushkin replied civilly enough, although in a strained voice:

"Poetry, my Polish *nobleman*, is for the elect; politics for the rabble. In addition, poets have always helped to light the road to freedom. But they are not murderers. They do not stab men in the back. They are usually able to find decent ways in which to work. At the same time they war against injustice. They are scornful of power and place. They uphold truth for truth's sake. A poet is seldom deceived by the shows of things. He has the surest eye for what is hidden. In the poet, you who profess to disdain him, there is something of the prophet. You can trust his vision if you cannot his reason. Be assured of that.

"To return to Alexander, whom God protect!" he added defiantly, his slender body becoming rigid and determined; "remember, my wise friends, that he did not wish to rule. And that is equally true, as you know, of both his older brothers, Constantine and Nicholas. They have lived always amid murders, amid sudden deaths, you might say. They heard the blows struck, they heard the struggle that killed their father. They prefer a simple life, insignificance, to the throne.

"Alexander is ruling now, not because he wishes to, but for your sake, for mine. And this is the way you wish to repay him. He has no ambition. He was born above its vulgar impulses. Instead of greed of power, there is in his nature the weariness, the ensuing disillusion of Russia's turbulent — more, tragic past. In him there is the physical reaction of that prolonged debauch which was the life of his ancestors.

"You say that he has changed, that he used to be one of us. That is true. But Russia has changed also, and you, who pretend to be so wise, cannot see it. And so have I. And all the world — since the wars of Napoleon.

"Alexander has been forced to use new means in order to meet new conditions. Other influences, too, have come upon him. He

is only a man. He cannot wholly escape the environment, the usual life of a man. One of these unfortunate influences has been Prince Metternich. Few men, you know, have resisted the fascination of Metternich. And Alexander is just the man not to do it. It is tragic, my friends, instead of blameworthy, the way Metternich has chilled the loving impulses of his heart. And he has worked busily, too, to break up his friendships. He set about isolating him, the better, *sometime*, to control him. That is why after 1812 he sent away his former advisers. It is the finger of Metternich, my good friends, that points the destiny of Europe —"

"To hell with Metternich!" was the prompt response.

"Metternich," declared Sergius Mouravieff-Apostol solemnly, with his air of studious deliberation, "is one of mankind's oppressors. With a gesture of those long, white hands of his, or a gay word, he sweeps away the freedom of races —"

"To hell with Metternich!" was the more gruff, responsive roar.

"But he, Alexander, is ours," went on Alexis Sergiewitch tenderly. "He belongs to us. We must stand by him. Alexander is not a despot. These new measures of his, of which you disapprove so greatly, are merely temporarily self-protective. He was forced for the moment to make them. He is a broad-minded, kind-hearted man placed by accident over a people who understand only physical force."

Hisses again.

"What do *you* know about it?" queried Kakhovsky insolently. "You are only an artist. You are just a lapdog for a lady's boudoir." In the tone there was a new reproach, a peculiar disdain, which he had not heard before. It was the first touch of the bitter world's envy of which hatred is born. It was the first cold breath of criticism to be spoken aloud against him.

Alexis Sergiewitch looked across at the man he had always hated, with an expression upon his pale face that made Kakhovsky remember suddenly that the poet was not only fearless, but a famous swordsman. Kakhovsky therefore contented himself with whispering in the ear of Pestel the words he did not dare say aloud.

"He only joined the society because he thought it was fashionable. To him it is just a new way of wearing your mind. The only thing he is really interested in," he ended maliciously, "is a new style in cravats — or the smallness of the feet of his mistress. Did you know he is foolish over the feet of women?"

Before Pestel could find time to reply, Ryleiev had arisen to defend Alexis Sergiewitch and to conciliate him, and Pestel did not wish to disturb in the least his recently acquired influence over the eloquent, the popular Ryleiev.

"We are not murderers, Alexis Sergiewitch," he declared in a voice that showed both kindness and indulgence. "We desire the enlightenment of our people just as you do, their freedom, too, and their happiness. A great goal this! We must be ready to do anything that is demanded, in return for good so great. You will believe just as we do when the matter is placed before you differently.

"It is our desire to right wrong, not to do wrong. It is our desire to banish suffering, not to cause suffering. It is for others we strive, not for ourselves. With us there is no aim either petty or personal. We work not for our present, individual triumph, but for the future of the human family.

"There must be no more wars! There must be no more cruel shedding of men's blood to gratify an autocrat's ambition, and by loss of man-power retard the development of the world. The battles of the future must be different. They must be bloodless battles; battles of the drawing-room, the counting-house; battles of commanding scientists, of wisely utilized industry; in short, economic forces.

"New battles must be for the increasing, numerically, of enlightening fields of activity, for extended human welfare, not in the sad suffering of soldiers who are helpless, and whose death is a world-loss, even to the victor."

Again young Pushkin saw Ryleiev's eyes dilate with the madness of inspiration, and he suddenly felt dwarfed, insignificant, in the presence of this man who loved his fellows better than himself or the gratification of any personal desire.

"Our Russia," Ryleiev went on to explain, "is perhaps chosen

to lead the way in this vast enlightening movement, this spiritual uplift. For sake of this goal, the freedom of man, the developing of world-forces, here perhaps revolutions will come and go, with regularity, with power, until storm, until electricity, have swept clear the sky for the glory of a new sun, a new earth. It may become an active mental laboratory for the making of a nobler, a more unfettered race. Of these revolutions new ideas, new ideals will be born, and then held out toward the race. It will become the world's hothouse, the world's forcing plant for thought of certain kinds. The ideas will be seldom right in their entirety, because man cannot like God create without trial, but on the other hand they will be original, enterprising — most important of all, sincere. The educated Russian will become the world's most daring thinker. He will have the most completely emancipated mind. He will not be hobbled mentally by the tenets of the past. Not in any way will he be bound by tradition, nor by prejudice. He will be ready to greet — *the new earth.*

"Here, perhaps, all laws, moral, political, civil, will be destroyed for the necessary making of new ones, different ones, better ones. Laws must be *re*made, *re*adjusted to people, just like their clothing. It is just as necessary that they should fit, should bear some relation to the wearer. Old-fashioned, useless laws, regulations of mind, must be cut up and the material made over into better ones. This will entail grief, suffering, perhaps loss. It will be like the necessary but painful setting of a leg that is broken.

"As I said, there will be suffering. But the eyes of men will be strengthened to bear the suffering by the rainbow vision of hope, of fresh creativeness, still existing, by the assurance of the endless and as yet untouched possibilities of the future. It will gladden their eyes with limitless promise.

"It will be the miniature world-stage upon which for a time man's ideals will be visualized for them who cannot visualize; *embodied*, would be better, for the surer comprehending. And they who projected the idea, and then presented it as a play for exhibiting, will pay, perhaps, for their pleasure, their unselfish daring for enlightenment, with death. But a new force will have

been born, a proof of endless, fresh creativeness always going on. The eyes even of the doubters will have glanced farther into the depths, where new worlds are being made, and they will gain a little of the faith that there is no such thing as the reasoned, the compulsory standstill, foolishly named *perfection*, for either individual life or for governments, morally or politically. Life means change, progress, *growth*."

Pushkin was impressed by the speech of Ryleiev. More, he was moved by it, but in a way that Ryleiev did not count upon. It did not draw Alexis Sergiewitch nearer to him, but, on the contrary, it pushed him farther away. It threw the nature of Alexis Sergiewitch, for the time being, into sharper relief. He saw that this noble, this unselfish, vision was greater than anything that he himself would ever do. And he saw, too, that he could not share it. It was something outside the circle of his desires, his interests. Ryleiev continued in a calmer voice.

"Because certain laws, certain beliefs, suited the year 1275, does it in any way follow that they must suit the year 1820? Why should they? What possible reason is there to give? Is a law sacred aside from its timely applicability? Should not the outworn and unfit be discarded for the better? Is law a matter of sentiment? Is a threadbare idea any better than a threadbare garment? Is it any more serviceable? And how can you know whether or not a garment fits unless you try it on? How else can you be sure that it is useful?

"These try-ons, which are disagreeable, are at the same time instructive. They mean the vigor, the progress of humanity. The flag of revolution is being unfurled throughout the world. Even in Spain, a royal Bourbon stronghold. In Italy, no matter how disdainfully Prince Metternich may speak of that country. In the Low Countries. Even among the students in Germany. Kings and queens will soon be as ridiculous in real life as figures upon playing cards would be, parading along the streets in their stiff, saw-tooth crowns of pasteboard. A prodigious, future upheaval is on the way. Powers never before listed, and until now unexplored, are to be called into use. We are going, too, to find out that there is something greater than nationalism. And that

is internationalism, the welfare of all mankind. There is something greater and more sacred than a geographical boundary, and that is mankind working together for the good of mankind.

"No matter how much we may differ individually, temperamentally, or intellectually, there is only one thing to be done, and that is what our brother Pestel said. We cannot buy freedom with words, with tears."

He ended amid consternation and slight applause. Pushkin knew that Pestel had private political ambitions, and that at the same time he was seeking revenge for his father's abrupt dismissal from office, and his disgrace in Siberia.

"I know — I feel in my heart" — Alexis Sergiewitch made answer — "that you are wrong. Murder is always wrong. It cannot be right. You have not understood him. With Alexander a hope of justice, all things you ask for, in fact, is now near you. It is you who are blind. It is you who cannot understand. His one desire is to give Russia what you want, what I want, a constitution. He is merely waiting for the proper moment when the people can both appreciate and use intelligently a good so great. You cannot put a sword into the hand of a child, can you? He is a political Messiah, I tell you, sent for your saving, whom you are hastening to crucify — *O ye of little faith!*"

He sat down feeling baffled and defeated. In addition, he did not have the peculiarly emancipated mind which was characteristically Russian, because he came of a mixed race. He did not see so far ahead. And at heart he was aristocratic, conservative. He kept his daring for the art of words. He was a poet, too, and believed therefore that life was so good just as it was that it would be foolish to trouble about making it better. His judgments were æsthetic judgments. Again the luxurious, violet-perfumed boudoir of the night before swung seductively before his youthful brain.

He was worn out physically, too; worn out with weeks of insufficient sleep, dissipation, gambling, drinking, and dangerous love affairs. There was nothing left in him with which to combat.

"Do you recall what Dershawin said?" questioned Pestel. "'Take but one step forward, Russia, and the world is yours.'"

"Dershawin was an old ass!" interrupted Pushkin savagely. "He not only wrote in Tartar, but he thought in Tartar, too!"

This angered Pestel afresh. He resented the tone of superiority.

"I suppose you think you'll go free while the rest of us will be punished, do you not?" remarked Pestel scornfully. "What do you suppose people are saying about your 'Ode to the Dagger'?"

"That was — just poetry."

"*Hear him! Hear him!*" they roared scornfully.

When he wrote of the dagger as the last weapon of injustice, to him it was merely the eloquence of words. It was a sort of æsthetic, emotional escape valve. He had no interest in so practical a thing as its application. He was just treating a subject poetically.

"You will find out the world does not think so," Pestel flung back maliciously. "You will see what will happen to you!"

There was little cunning in his nature. There was no inclination to concealment. He usually said, with astonishing frankness, whatever occurred to him, with small regard at the moment for consequences.

When Alexis Sergiewitch made biting epigrams or wrote witty, jesting verses, there was seldom an evil intention in his heart. He was merely playing with words. He was practicing, so to speak, in the same way that a musician practices. But the unpoetic world, unaware necessarily of this creative impulse, placed a different interpretation upon his flexible word-play, and condemned him. To-night for the first time this disparity of judgment was clear to him, and it staggered him. It made him for the moment unhappy. To him the "Ode to a Dagger" was just poetry. To his companions it was a serious call to rebellion, to revolution, which they were convinced he was basely attempting to disavow.

What did he care about such a stupid thing as reform? The thought that he could care for it was laughable. It shivered him

with restrained merriment when he heard it mentioned. He only wished to live, to live superbly. He wished to touch life richly at just as many points as possible. The world was well enough. Besides, that was God's business and not his.

He was exclusively an artist. He was peculiarly uncaring of other things. In his heart he was interested in beauty, not morality, not political betterment. Why could not other people be happy and careless and mind their own business just as he did?

"There is not a soldier nor a sailor, my fine dandy," Karhovsky continued, taking up the argument gladly, seeing the evident defeat of Pushkin, "who does not know by heart your disrespectful epigrams against government officials, the nobility, the church, and your obscene, unprintable stories, which surpass the French Crébillon in indecency. What do you suppose Alexander will say when some one sings to him what you wrote about his favorite, Arakcheiev?" — humming merrily the naughty song which began:

"Arak-*ché*-iev's — An-as-*tás*-ia"

— emphasizing insolently the accents and beating time mockingly. "You may just as well join us. You see, you can't escape — *after that!*"

The combination of facts was disagreeable, to say the least. Sergiewitch began to feel that torturing complexity of consciousness, that mental double-seeing, which is characteristic of the creative mind. He disliked these difficult cross-currents of emotion, of thought.

Alexis Sergiewitch, in his heart, not only loved but respected Alexander. Now he was ashamed to recall the number of times the Emperor had pardoned like a father the indiscretions of his wild youth. He felt a veritable gripping in the heart to recall certain lines of his "Ode to Liberty," which once, with boyish vanity, he had thrown in front of the carriage of the Emperor. That was before he came to Petersburg to live, when he was attending the Lyceum in Zarskoje Selo. Any other but Alexander would have sent him to the mines. That was a shameful insult. He suffered to think of it. But the words rollicked through his mind and

he could not stop them. Besides, that kind of thinking just then was the fashion.

To him now this "Ode" represented merely youth, and, worst of all, bad taste. Had words like these, which to him were only poetry, the fleeting enthusiasm of a moment, set people to thinking of revolution? And, worse than that, *murder?* Now to his shame guilt was added.

He believed in freedom, to be sure. Who does not? He believed in talking, in writing, about everything. That was the way to enlarge the horizon of life, of the mind. But putting words into action was something ridiculous, not to be thought of. It was out of the question, of course. Stupidity was something puzzling to deal with. What a disagreeable incomprehension!

Seeing how great was Pushkin's confusion, Ryleiev came over to him. The face of Ryleiev, at close range, looked thinner than usual to-night; the eyes more dream-haunted, as if he were being consumed by some inner emotion.

"Hear what I wrote to-day, Alexis Sergiewitch!" speaking in a low, confidential, friendly voice close to his ear. Evidently he wished to be heard only by him. "Do you suppose, Alexis Sergiewitch, that there are moments in life when men look ahead and foresee their own fate? I feel that is what I have done."

His voice trembled slightly. There was a new note of earnestness in it. Pushkin realized upon the instant that Ryleiev had a great heart, and the bravery, the singleness of purpose, that makes martyrs. He pitied him. He admired him. At the same time he wished passionately to save him from something, and he did not know exactly what. Ryleiev began to repeat:

It is time, the secret voice keeps whispering to me, to destroy the tyrants of the Ukraine.

. . . . . .

I am not ignorant of the fact that an abyss will open beneath the feet of the first one who rises against the oppressors of the nation.

Destiny has chosen me —

This sentiment surprised Alexis Sergiewitch. He had no hint until to-night that the desire to kill Alexander had taken root in

their minds. He had been dissipating gayly as usual, making love, and penning merry jingles, while his friends had been planning their own martyrdom. Again the disparity of plan, of outlook, struck him sharply. For the first time he felt an alien among them. To him this was peculiarly distasteful. He saw that he had slight interest in humanity, that his own serious interests were different. Aloud he said nothing. He waited hopelessly for Ryleiev. At length he inquired hesitatingly, in a voice which showed he had the subject at heart: "You will join us — will you not, Alexis Sergiewitch? You know we need you."

Alexis Sergiewitch shook his head with sad determination.

Another disagreeable sensation followed; pity. And at the same time he knew he could not hold him back from the course he was pursuing. Kakhovsky had been right when he declared that these boyish plotters were only dreamers — poets. What had they to do with reality?

Young Mouravieff-Apostol was looking across at the two of them sympathetically. He did not seem to be enjoying himself any better than young Pushkin. He would gladly have slipped away had he not been afraid of his stern brother's disapproval. Alexander Bestushew, too, was as frightened at the turn affairs had taken as he was. He was more than good-looking. He belonged to the world of fashion and bore the nickname of "good little boy." And so was handsome young Baratinsky, who was known to be devoted to Alexander. He had no taste for anything like this. But Bestushew was weak, and the influence of Ryleiev was as great over him as the influence of Pestel, momentarily, over Ryleiev. Prince Viazemsky was shocked. He was an aristocrat with a bitter tongue. He made up his mind to get out of it. He liked to rail at every one, to be sure. But that ended it. He knew enough to pause on the right side of action. Prince Troubetzkoi no one could judge or count upon, because he had a habit of standing on both sides of questions.

But there was handsome Baratinsky slipping softly away toward the door, and not wearing his usual air of pleasant assurance. He was going to make a quick escape. He knew how dangerous it was to be here. "That," thought Alexis Sergiewitch,

"is just what I am going to do." He knew it was what he should have done an hour ago. This was an unsafe place to be found to-night. There was no use trying to save Ryleiev. There was no use arguing with him, while that wild light shone in his eyes.

"Come — join us — Alexis Sergiewitch!" Ryleiev was pleading again.

"I cannot, Ryleiev. You know I have n't any inclination for this thing. I do not belong here. Besides, I 'm worn out. I need sleep. Make my excuses to the others. I 'm going."

The last three years, since he joined the Foot Guards, he had been leading a fast life in the fashionable military set. He had been continually on the go in a futile, brilliant society. This was his first attempt at keeping up that perplexing dual life which was always to be his; man of fashion, soldier, poet, libertine, scholar, idle dreamer. He was beginning to feel the strain of it now, young as he was. He was beginning to feel how dangerous it is to try to live more than one life, however well dowered one may be.

Ryleiev walked as far as the door with him, a little sadly, Alexis Sergiewitch thought. The rest were still arguing, still talking excitedly, when he slipped away. The only person who saw him go out the door was young Mouravieff-Apostol, and he knew he would say nothing. He was wishing bitterly that he could get away as easily.

After Pushkin had gone downstairs, Maximilian Klinger, the poet and German spy, who hated Austria profoundly, unfolded a paper from which he read aloud some of the latest utterances of Prince Metternich, in order to spur on hatred of that statesman. He declared that Metternich was a cold-blooded cynic made especially for cajoling of kings and the camouflaging of pernicious, political faiths. He called him Europe's watchdog. He read in a clear, distinct voice, and with malicious pleasure:

If I may impute to myself any merit, it is that of having opened Alexander's eyes to the circumstances and the people now surrounding him. I have all my life had to preach to deaf ears; now people are beginning to listen because their eyes are being opened. This is espe-

cially the case of Petersburg. The Emperor, Alexander, now sees clearly — of that I have daily proof.

"What do you say to that? Here is another," gauging accurately as he unfolded the paper the effect of the first reading:

The Liberals have a peculiar talent for deceiving themselves. They shall never make me move — and the Liberals with all their following of fools shall not win the day as long as God gives me strength.

"It is Metternich, my friends, who is killing the movement for freedom. He has a genius for destruction. Why Metternich has given Alexander a book on the fly-leaf of which he wrote: '*People to be checked.*' Our names are there."

"The world will find," declared Sergius Mouravieff-Apostol, impressed by the reading of Klinger, "that the victorious soldiers returned from France have not forgotten so speedily what they learned of equality there."

"Be assured of that!" agreed Pestel. "The plan," he went on, "is this: Alexander is to be shot the next time he goes south to review the troops. That time cannot be so far off. There is a Turkish war threatening."

This evidently was the climax of the plot, as far as it was arranged at this moment. Its disclosure was the reason of the joint meeting of the two societies.

The Petersburg that met Pushkin's eyes as he stepped outside on this early spring midnight was unlike that of the century that had passed. It no longer resembled a Finnish village, something hastily improvised, and of wood. The streets had been paved in part. They were beginning to build granite quays along the great river. The Mikhail Palace had been erected. Saint Isaac's had been rebuilt and enriched. A new library had been opened to the public in 1815, and statues of various personages had been placed for adornment along the streets, most imposing of which, æsthetically speaking, was Falconet's vigorous reproduction in bronze of the Great Peter.

Pushkin walked home instead of driving through the early

spring night, chiefly for the purpose of helping disembarrass his mind of the disagreeable impressions of the evening. He walked alone through the long, dim streets which are wide.

He was glad to be alone. The evening had been not only disagreeable but dangerous. How could he know what report Klinger would make of it? Klinger envied him. He would put him in the worst light. What might not Kakhovsky report? He was angry to think he had been simple enough to be tricked into going.

In the great Square he paused for a moment to enjoy more fully the sense of release from the crowd he had left, to shake off their influence, and he turned to look seaward for a moment, toward those magnificent and lonely plains that stretch to meet the Gulf of Finland. He saw the great river. It rose like a fountain of crystal from the depths of Lake Ladoga, and then swept its shining length across the level plain. It was pale and smooth to-night. It reflected the little cold stars which seemed to penetrate it. It possessed the pale, the perverse charm of the North.

Day, according to the clock, was not so far away when he reached his room. He was too restless, however, to go to sleep. Too many worrying thoughts were besetting him. He dropped down in a chair to rest.

When the light began to poke its pallid, prying fingers around the windows, he took pencil and paper and wrote to Ryleiev. He wrote a firm refusal to join the society. His conscience was lighter. He called a *schweizer* and sent him with it to Ryleiev's house.

He sat down again in the chair and leaned back. He relaxed. The mask of living which we all make for ourselves was lifted, and then, physically, he belonged, for the time being, to that negro race from which he came.

Now over by the window there was a figure, which in the dull light of the dawn of early spring, suggested a black man from the jungles of Africa! There was something about it, tense, dynamic beyond the power of the white race to express, something burned, tempered, by the rays of deadly suns. Pushkin was sleeping.

CHAPTER II

ALEXANDER AND ELIZABETH

THE little room in the Winter Palace, which was the Emperor's private workroom, was familiar to people not only in Russia but throughout the Continent, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, because it had been reproduced so frequently.

It was a small room. It was unostentatious. At one end a row of windows. At some distance from the windows, but in direct line with them, stood a long, square-cornered desk, opposing flatly the light, a desk which might have belonged to a business man. Upon the desk were two square, blue-glass ink-wells, and a pile of pens, placed there freshly each morning. On either end, two neat stacks of paper, even and white. A round-topped, wooden chair at a little distance away; and facing the windows in the rear, several straight-backed chairs, in a row; to the right, against the north wall of the somewhat oblong room, a narrow, hard, leather couch — brown — with a flat, leather cushion at the head.

The paintings upon the wall, which were expensive and well chosen, were the only marks of distinction, except the somewhat lonely figure that was pacing gloomily back and forth in the open space in front of the desk. The figure harmonized with the paintings, which were the visible expression of beauty which great painters, impelled by some spiritual longing, had realized. Such a figure was Alexander.

He was tall. He was superbly formed, even to the details of hands and feet. He wore a suit of fine, black broadcloth cut to fit tightly like the clothes in which we remember the painted Napoleon. He looked as if he were moulded from head to foot in black, smooth, lusterless velvet. His waist was slender as a woman's, and flexible, to match his fine, long-fingered hands, and slender feet. His throat was swathed in cambric, and ruffles of the same fine material fell over his hands. He wore no jewelry,

no ornaments. Nowhere was there gleam of gold, nor gem. But the face would arrest a sensitive observer first. It was not only beautiful in its regularity beyond the ordinary, but noble, with the light, slightly wavy, gold-brown hair brushed smoothly back, *à la* the style of Metternich, but it was so full of kindliness — even gentleness — that it was not easy to turn away from its charm.

The features had the fine precision of an unworn coin, and the mouth almost always smiled. At the first glance it was not easy to resist its fascination. It was a face, indeed, which had charmed Europe, even cold-blooded Napoleon, who exclaimed with something like enthusiasm when he first looked at him: "He is the handsomest and the noblest of the Greeks!"

But if one observed it a little longer, perhaps, one found that these gentle, clear eyes, whose lids were so lovely, so smoothly white, seldom smiled. One found that one could not look within them and reach the soul that dwelled there or make it respond. They were like looking into superb, pellucid gems. And just as it was impossible to read the eyes, it was likewise impossible to read the mind behind the eyes. The impression would be gradually borne in upon the onlooker that few would be able to find out what dwelled behind this charming face, whether because its sphinx-like peculiarity was so natural, or because its owner was so sensitive that he had made for himself a protective ideal from which nothing could make him deviate; that behind this fascinating, polished exterior, he lived safe, sheltered. Then the observer would very likely question himself: Was he superfine? Or was he so subtle, so self-contained, that no one could fathom him?

It was spring. In the spring Alexander was melancholy. It was the time of year when he was most unhappy. It was usually what might be termed a penitential period with him, because it was then, as a boy, but as the eldest of the family, that he had given unwilling consent for the murder of his father. He had been forced to do it, in fact, in order to save the lives of his mother, his brothers, his sisters — and Russia — from the ruin of a madman. However extenuating circumstances might be urged

in his favor, he could not get over the fact that he *had done it.* It was he who had given consent. It was he, therefore, who was guilty, who must pay the penalty, in grief, in remorse, which his too sensitive nature could not shake off. There was no way to argue the deed undone.

They were all murdered *in the spring* — his father, Kotzebue, and the Duc de Berry. His father and Kotzebue, his spy, in the same month, March. And they had all just reached the height of power.

'Like them, I am about to reach my height of power — my efficiency," he said to himself with decision, startled at sound of his voice in the lonely room. "And then — like them — and all things else in nature — comes — *the end.*"

He walked over to the window and looked out. There he saw his fat, German mother, now no longer young, pass on horseback through the dirty, wet streets, attired in men's clothes, after his having expressly forbidden her to ride in public in that attire. She was a ridiculous figure. Her two legs looked like inflated balloons. He was displeased. But no trace of displeasure showed upon his face. Behind her came his sister, dressed the same way, and looking almost as ridiculous, although youth helped her a little. But he had forbidden them to ride like this.

He rang. A servant entered. He sent for his confidential secretary. A bent, old man with thin, pale hair who had the furtive, uplooking eyes and trained, expressionless face of them who serve the great, came in.

"Have all letters written by my mother, sisters, brought to me — before they are sent." One disobedience, he thought, might lead to another.

"Very good, Your Majesty." The bent gray figure backed out again. The door closed.

His mother had never forgiven him, he knew, for not letting her rule in his place. Upon horseback just now, as she passed his window, she had reminded him of her persistent inclination to play Catherine the Great.

Years of discipline had taught him to respond to the slightest governmental need, with the same slave-like obedience of the

old man who had just gone out the door. His extremely complex mind saw at that instant the resemblance. They were both slaves of state. And a slave is a slave, whether he stands at the top or the bottom of the ladder.

There were other and external reasons, too, now that were leading to a change of mind, of nature — perhaps — in Alexander, and each one of which was contributing its quota to make him give up one by one the plans of the past. One was personal observation of men, of affairs, as he was forced to view them from his superior position. One was general contact with people. The other was a peculiarity that had developed from this, gradually, persistently, the power to read the hearts of others. And his frequent trips abroad, too, had influenced him, especially the trips upon which he had come in contact with Prince Metternich, and the resulting influence of that statesman over him.

The first time was in Vienna in 1817, when peace had been promised to the world. With his present knowledge, gained by personal experience, he smiled scornfully at the thought.

"*Peace!* What a wild, useless word was that! Man might as well say: Let there be light. People could not agree upon peace any more than upon anything else."

The second time had been at the Congress of Aix in 1819. Here again Prince Metternich had gained ascendancy over his mind, by restoring to him the feeling of happiness, of power. Here, too, he had been astonished, disgusted, at the unkingly actions of the German ruler, who disavowed whatever he said, and then prayed aloud to God to release him from his oaths. He had lied in a most unkingly manner. More recently he had returned from the little town of Troppau where again he had met Metternich, and again come under that wily statesman's personal charm, which was really the most dangerous of his powers.

Prince Metternich was older than he by a few years, and he was a ruler of men whose ability had been tested. He had won his diplomatic experience in the difficult period Napoleon had dominated. He was a bulwark of reliance, of defense. He recalled just now that statesman saying: "My policy has the value of a religion because it is not influenced by passion." This had

pleased Alexander particularly. It was a sentiment in harmony with his nature. He had faith in him, too, as most men of his class had faith in him then. And Alexander agreed with him largely now, if but as a temporary need. Upon one point perfectly, that the first need of the world was peace.

"Wars, you see," the courtly, eloquent Metternich had explained to him, "leave long comet-like trails of pernicious influence. They furrow deep the souls of races. It is not alone the dead they kill. They dishearten, they destroy the faith, the courage in the living. It takes the green, sweet freshness of many springs," he added slowly, "to efface their sorrow."

This was another argument to appeal particularly to Alexander. No one understood better than Metternich the nature of the man with whom he was talking, and the best way to sway him.

They were sitting alone at the moment in the drawing-room of the oak-paneled ceiling in the little castle assigned them in Troppau. Here Metternich had entertained him, banished his melancholy, then played for him, improvised wonderfully, in order to attune himself to the mood of Alexander.

"You know, Your Majesty," he declared — "because who else could know as well as you? — that the disease, which was the Revolution, is slowly undermining Europe, and the old, safe life of our fathers — nay, more — civilization. This Europe of ours is like a rotten cliff. It is already weakened to its foundation. It is beginning to crumble, to feel the tottering weight of its height. There would be nothing gained if you and I conceal facts from one another. We both know that Europe is preparing for dissolution — in a future whose date we may not with exactitude determine."

He who was never in haste paused for his words to have full weight, and to enjoy them himself, like the epicure of life he was. He liked the sound of his voice. And he liked his well-placed, effective phrases. Nevertheless his face was sad. The thought grieved him.

"I doubt — to tell the truth — if Europe will ever again be stable. . . . Not, anyway, until some *new kind of civilization*

comes — to sweep away completely the old" — with a touch of sadness which was genuine this time. "But — both you and I hold positions which are too important to coquette with untried facts. We both must abide by what is best now. We cannot gamble upon a future — *that may not be.*"

Again the wily Metternich had paused, to frame effectively his final sentence in silence.

Metternich knew that, however much Alexander might long for good, he had no faith in men. He knew that he was born with that distrust in his heart which his dissipated, worldly, old grandmother had gained from a lifetime of debauchery. This weakened him.

"In your country — even more than mine — this is not possible — coquetting with the new. Russia is large — therefore unwieldy. It is composed of hostile, of heterogeneous elements — as you know. *It would be the first to crumble!* "

As Alexander recalled now, in his lonely room, this last statement of Austria's long-headed Minister, he understood that it was the lifted lash, held over his own head. At the same time he was forced to admit to himself that it was true.

Metternich knew that the inherited weakness of Alexander — his lack of faith in humanity — took away from him the refuge to which he might have fled for help — his people. Therefore he must place his reliance in the same thing that he, Metternich, did, which was power, held in his own hands. However much Alexander might pity, he could not trust. Pity is an act of superiority. Trust means treating with an equal.

Despite the disclosures of the popular Austrian statesman, these were happy days spent with Prince Metternich in the little castle of Troppau. They were men of like elevation of nature, of training. Both possessed the same suave, polished exterior, the same discipline and *savoir-faire* in avoiding unpleasantnesses. Metternich could be eloquent and entertaining even with the multiplication table. He could treat the most tiresome details with charm. He could give to politics the magic of romance. He was a delightful *causeur*, and a musician, too, by nature and training. He did not neglect to make use of the evident pleasure which Alexander found in his company.

He did not, to be sure, take up again the serious discussion of things political. But from time to time — delicately — he interspersed his conversation with quotations which would have the effect he desired. One of these quotations had had serious effect upon Russia. It was from Napoleon. "You see me master of France! Well — I would not agree to govern France three months — with liberty of the press." This was one of the first impulses to bring about the press censorship, which had so irritated the young societies. Alexander did not intend to perpetuate it. It was merely a temporary measure of precaution.

The other quotation was from Napoleon, too, and said by him to Metternich once in Paris: "You do not know what a mighty thing is happiness." Alexander was just finding out to-day, in his sad and lonely meditating, that that was what he was losing — *happiness*. Under the continual strain of government, under the pressure of opposition, of contending factions, of quarreling place-seekers, he was beginning to lose happiness, *to die within*, a sort of unseen, moral death. Many times since that day in Troppau these words had occurred to him. *He was losing happiness.*

Despite these frank, these unreassuring political disclosures, he still had a feeling of regret for those days of pleasant,unforced companionship with the Austrian diplomatist in Troppau, which was really the unuttered desire for the near presence of some one upon whom he could rely, some one firmer of will, some one more determined, more aggressive than himself — and more eager to rule.

He was interrupted in his moody introspection by a tap at the door. Again a servant entered. He announced that the priest, Photius, was waiting without. This royal but disciplined servant of the people, who had ceased to consider his personal pleasure, gave word to admit him.

A brown, limp, cassock-clothed figure bounded through the door, with a movement that suggested an animal. When he had crossed the threshold, he did not speak, nor move toward a chair. He remained haughty, erect, without a word of greeting, looking the Emperor directly in the eye. For an instant the Emperor looked back at him commandingly. Then with a graceful smile,

half indulgence to bad manners, half gentleness, he bent his head before the uncouth, dirty being, who lifted a hand and made the sign of the cross over his bent head. After this he advanced into the room in increased good-humor. He took a seat in one of the straight-backed chairs. Photius, the furious, was in the habit of declaring that priests represent the incarnate God on earth, and that any one of them who shows timidity in presence of a *mere ruler* is no better than a wet rat. The phrases of Photius were usually inelegant, but correspondingly easy of comprehension.

Alexander, knowing the ignorant man's hobby, bent his head to the priest. Then he seated himself gravely in the rosewood chair, resigned to the disagreeable interview which was sure to follow.

Photius was an unpleasant object to contemplate. He was tall, gaunt. He had reddish, long, graying hair, falling uncombed about his cheeks. He had the round head — minus the elongation in the back — the round eyes a trifle too near together, of people who cannot reason and who like to combat. His eyes were light blue and the white was blood-streaked. The face was not very intelligent, not noble at all, and far from prepossessing. His forehead bulged somewhat, and looked as if it had bumps upon it which would not go down. His nose was insignificant — as is frequent with people who are cruel by nature or combative — and too small; and his mouth shapeless. Just at this moment he happened to be the fashionable confessor for the women of the Petersburg great world. This gave him increased importance. He was in the habit of either wheedling them or frightening them — as the case might demand — out of considerable sums of money. All of which he kept greedily for himself.

He was ignorant, dogmatic. He was not well balanced. He was narrow and fanatical. He seldom washed, considering it a Godless act, nor troubled to keep himself decently clean. He slept in a coffin, in a small, underground room where there was little air, and whose walls were covered with icons, with relics. He spent most of his time in trying to reduce society to a state of ignorance equal to his own.

"How are things going in our city, which is sacred to your patron saint, friend Photius?"

"Badly, Your Majesty — *badly* —"

"How is that?" — with surprise just tinged with interest.

"That is why I am here, Your Majesty."

Alexander made no remark. He merely looked sympathetic and waited for the priest to continue.

"Men are on the wrong road, Your Majesty."

Alexander said nothing. Again he looked sympathetic and waited for the priest to speak on.

"They are not headed for the pastures of faith — of good works. They are rushing toward the pastures of desire" — his voice rising with emotion unpleasantly.

"Be explicit, friend Photius. What has happened?"

"Young men, all over our country, are forming societies — in Moscow — in Great Novgorod — here, too. They further the ways, not of God, but the Devil. They are just as dangerous as the Masonic Lodges."

Again Alexander looked sympathetic. Again he waited.

"What should a society be for if not to praise God? I tell you it must be stopped" — his anger, restrained up to now, breaking forth upon a sudden, like steam when a kettle cover is lifted.

"You are referring to the literary societies — the young men, I presume."

"That is it. Exactly it, Your Majesty. Both here and in Moscow. They meet to study Godless writers, *poetry*. Why, a poet is getting to be of as much importance as a priest," he added angrily.

"We must have various kinds of people, I suppose, in our nation, friend Photius. We must live, in some sort, the life the rest of the Continent live, must we not?" asked the Emperor conciliatingly.

"Last night — they met" — taking no notice of the remark and not replying. "They have been meeting pretty regularly. They say anything — *anything*. The one who ridicules best the state, the nobility, the church, they applaud most. They respect nothing." Here the memory of a witticism by Alexis Sergiewitch

about the way Photius spent his nights, *in a coffin*, made him tremble with rage. The jingle had set Russia laughing. For weeks he had been longing to get even with the writer.

There was sometimes a point that stung like an adder in the naughty lampoons of Pushkin. Mixed with the sting there was usually just enough fact to set every one laughing.

But the words of Photius had winged Alexander's thoughts in an altogether different direction than the priest had intended. No one could count exactly upon the effect words might have upon him. He was continuing as before his line of gently suggested protest.

"A civilized nation, friend Photius," he remarked without emphasis, "must have a range of people — poets — priests — scholars, scientists, administrators, men of commerce, soldiers —"

Then he paused without completing the thought, feeling that reason could have no weight with the undisciplined, wild-featured figure facing him. But while he still preserved his usual charming, sphinx-like exterior, his mind took a little pleasure-excursion of its own choosing by way of relief.

Photius was right. Poets were singing throughout the land. And not only in Russia, but around the globe. It was blossom-time for the human mind, a somewhat similar blossom-time to that which once had been in Greece — long ago. Never but twice before had man's mind shown such capacity for flowering, such stored-up, unrestrainable energy, such quickly unfolded power.

Eighteen hundred marks a notable date. At that time, and the years that circle it closely, some inspiring impetus stole softly upon the world bringing with it an army of poets, of painters, musicians — of creative artists. Its effect was like that of the wind of the South in spring, blowing blue-and-white flowers over the steppe. Throughout the length, the breadth of Russia there was a piping, a chirruping. It was spring in the souls of men. This inspiring power of the youth of genius enfolded the land like a richer light. These young men, these poets, were breaking their hearts with song just like the nightingales

which he remembered long ago on certain resplendent midnights of his boyhood in the Ukraine. No other land had produced so many in so short time, he reflected with pride. Another peculiarity was that in their inexperienced youth they wrote like masters. They won their fame at an earlier age than the writers of other countries had even begun to think about theirs. They did not have to learn. They did not have to study, to work, to wait. They burst, full-blown, into the life of artists. One could not even enumerate them easily! There was Ryleiev, Baratinsky, Schukowsky, Viazemsky, Griboiedof, Delvig, and young Alexis Sergiewitch. It was like trying to count grass stalks in summer. And this had come with his reign. The glory of this belonged to him — in part.

"Oh! — it is n't *poetry* now, Your Majesty, they are busy with" — divining his thoughts. "It is conspiracy" — throwing up his cramped, dirty hands, with their claw-like nails. "They want to rule, Your Majesty, according to their Godless plans."

"No, no, friend Photius! Not conspiracy. Do not take them so seriously. They would not conspire against me. No one would. What you call by that unfortunate name is merely the distributed thought of the age — to which they, like many others, are giving expression. They are merely doing the same kind of thinking that is being done in various parts of the world to-day."

"But we must stop it, I tell you — *stop it!*" — jumping to his feet, and advancing in a threatening manner. "We must make our country different, we must make it a land of convents — houses of prayer — where one can hear only the tinkle of prayer bells, the sound of fingered breviaries — *order*." Then he controlled himself with a powerful effort and dropped down upon his chair.

"That is just it," thought Alexander. "He is a symbol of old Russia; its narrow-mindedness, its fanaticism. It is what I have worked to change, to modernize. It is just that that has hindered the execution of all my plans."

Photius, annoyed by the meditative silence of Alexander, slowly got up again. He advanced stealthily toward the front of

the desk behind which Alexander was sitting, without so much as asking permission.

"Your Majesty, I must tell you the truth! Last night there was a conspiracy, not against the government, but against the sacred life of Your Majesty!"

For a second Photius paused for breath. But there was no change of expression upon the trained face of Alexander. It was still gentle, still calm.

"They met, the brothers Mouravieff-Apostol, Pestel, Kakhovsky the Pole, young Baratinsky, Prince Odojewsky, Ryleiev, Alexis Sergiewitch — in short, all that crowd. Ryleiev and Alexis Sergiewitch were the leaders, the most vicious of the lot. First, Ryleiev amused the company by reading a disrespectful article about our excellent, our able Minister of War, Arakcheiev. The article was called 'The Favorite.' When he had finished young Alexis Sergiewitch leaped to his feet and recited a dirty verse about the same worthy representative of order, of decency, in Your Majesty's land, which began:

Arak-*ché*-iev's — An-as-*tás*-ia —

Every one roared with delight. Your Majesty knows what influence the words of Alexis Sergiewitch have always had over the people. Your Majesty knows how they sing in the streets whatever he writes. They are most dangerous, his songs, because people cannot forget them. They ought to be suppressed!

"After that the crowd arose. They sang his revolutionary 'Ode to the Dagger.' Then they made plans against the government — *to overthrow it!*" he whispered tragically, gasping for breath. There was a pause, slight, but effective.

"What would you advise, friend Photius?" was the diplomatic answer that broke the silence.

"This! — *This!* — Your Majesty! Send that insolent, dangerous Pushkin to the mines — *for life!*"

Photius had now said what he came to say. The released, electric energy of his heretofore suppressed hatred vibrated through the little room.

"We cannot always do, you know, just what we would like,

friend Photius. There are restraints upon us, you understand; restraints in form of world-opinion. What would enlightened Europe say if Alexander sent to the mines of Siberia the young men of genius of his land who are merely working off the superabundant energy of their youth — their brains? What he has done we deplore. We will take it under advisement. Can you not suggest some less arbitrary means — of — restoring — what you call — *order?*"

Photius felt mollified — more, flattered. Evidently he was considered of importance, worthy to help rule. His anger visibly decreased, seeing the goal so plainly within reach.

Alexander was too subtle to disturb with words this peace-giving meditation which had taken such careful dealing to produce. After a little Photius suggested, in a changed voice, which expressed his satisfaction.

"Suppose *we* send him to the Monastery of Solovetz?" The accented "*we*" amused Alexander, but he kept unchanged his smooth gravity.

"*Send him there — Your Majesty!* The priests will take the kinks out of him. I'll answer for that!" — smacking his lips in revengeful anticipation.

That gray, turret-bristling, sad Monastery of Solovetz, upon the Arctic Circle, by the shore of the White Sea! What a place to send a fellow like Pushkin who had leaped up like a God in the sunlight. The extensive training in Greek letters of Alexander in his youth, and in literature in general, made him able to comprehend the fact that in Pushkin there was some of that old Dionysian sense of joy, of vivid being, which meant stored-up, creative energy. Pushkin, telling his beads! Pushkin wearing an ash-hued cassock! Pushkin in the Monastery of Solovetz, on the shore of the White Sea! What a place for a poet in whom he knew throbbed the old Neronic dreams, the old jeweled glamour of visions, who loved the pageantry, the pomp of life. Alexander sensed prophetically upon the moment that in all probability life would be sad enough for him anyway. It is seldom too easy for the poet who perforce must dwell in a prose world. And in Alexis Sergiewitch there was African blood to make more peril-

ous the complexity. With his tropical blood and impulses he was sufficiently out of place. He was a vivid, equatorial bird of fire dropped by accident of destiny amid the sad fogs of a Finnish marsh.

"We will consider your suggestion, friend Photius. We will think it over. Important judgments, you know, require deliberation. We try to do our duty in this respect."

Photius was disappointed. He felt vaguely that his prey was slipping away from him.

"*Send him there, Your Majesty.* Do it now! And send Ryleiev along with him. Shut them up alone. Feed them on bread and water. You'll see the change then — how it is good for them."

"We will do something, friend Photius. We will do something. We thank you — and we will confer with you again." Alexander had risen in sign of dismissal.

"If you do not, Your Majesty" — bounding up with an angry suppleness that again recalled a wild animal held by a leash — "God will punish you!" — his voice rang out prophetically, sonorously. "Or if you delay — *too long* — then the judgment of God will be upon you. He will send His avenging floods upon the city — His lightning. He will send death. He will send uprisings — of peoples! — of nations! He will send His angry ocean to invade the land!"

His little round eyes were red as blood now. Only ancient Apocalyptic visions of terror dwelled in his undisciplined, narrow brain. His wild hair was falling in strings over his disordered face.

The door opened softly. The serene Alexander was bowing him out. He was hoping at the same time, in that beautiful voice that touched men's hearts, that he would have the pleasure of seeing him, soon again.

When the door closed there hovered over the mouth of Alexander an expression that recalled tantalizingly the less lovely mouth of his august grandmother, Catherine the Great, who was mistress of all dissimulation.

Photius had not gone far before he was fortunate enough to

meet his friend Arakcheiev, who had just returned to the city from a flying visit to his estate, Gruzena. He had been on a little shopping tour along the Nevsky Prospect, for the purpose of buying a large number of the cheapest account books he could find to send back by the peasant who had driven him in. Arakcheiev had a passion for exactitude, for the making of infinite additions. He had figured out a plan by which everything on his estate was to be listed, and *counted;* every cucumber, every tallow-candle end. Photius hailed him with delight. He told him of his interview with Alexander. He urged him to hasten to the Winter Palace, and use his greater influence for the same end.

Hunting down human prey pleased Arakcheiev. He hastened willingly to comply with the priest's request. He hated Alexis Sergiewitch too. The witty jingle about Anastasia, the mistress he loved, had touched him in a sensitive spot. At the same time it made him feel ridiculous. People were laughing at him. It made him rage, too, to confess to himself that he was unable to pay young Pushkin back with the same bloodless but deadly weapon, wit.

The Minister of War was ushered at once into the private office of the Emperor, who was genuinely glad to see him. In the presence of Arakcheiev, who did not have his own far, disconcerting, mental range, the restless, questioning, vacillating nature of Alexander found strength and poise. It was like a temporary restoration to health of mind. He enjoyed it. He knew, to be sure, that Arakcheiev's nature was cruel, that it was brutal, but at the same time he knew that a stronger, a less merciful hand than his own was needed in governing. Only God can mete out justice daily, without making mistakes. He knew that Arakcheiev supplied qualities that were lacking in himself. And then he had a debt of gratitude to pay to him. In his youth, Arakcheiev used to defend, to protect him, from the brutal anger of his father. He had saved him from many an unpleasantness.

When Arakcheiev was young he had been a corporal in Gatschina. He was ignorant. In the presence of a superior he was humble, cringing, but in the presence of an inferior he went as far the other way. He was a brutal master. He was an enemy of

liberalism, new ideas, because he sensed that their increasing influence was sure, in time, to lessen his own.

The man who entered flashed upon the senses the impression of something gray, colorless, without emotion. He was square-shouldered, but only of medium height. His eyes were small and cruel, like dots of intermittently visible flame. He was heavy. He had the short arms which sometimes go with immaturity of feeling, cruelty. He possessed neither the flexibility of body nor of mind which were so richly displayed in the royal figure opposite.

"I came in from Gruzena this morning, Your Majesty. My men, who have watched faithfully over Your Majesty's city, have informed me of a meeting last night. About this I find it necessary to confer with Your Majesty."

Alexander waited.

"The two societies, the Northern and the Southern, met in one of the upstairs rooms of the Russian-American Company, with the poet Ryleiev as host. They were all there — the young noblemen, and the writers. Word has been brought to me that the nature of the societies is changing. It is no longer literature — *nonsense* — songs — they talk about. It is government. In fact, Your Majesty, it has developed into a criminal conspiracy. And I am afraid that it has extensive offshoots — in other cities, Moscow, of course — Great Novgorod — and even farther south."

Alexander's face showed neither surprise nor fear. "Who told you?"

"Klinger the German. He was in the army awhile. He started back to Germany to-day."

"What did he say?"

"Enough to make me know that Ryleiev and Alexis Sergiewitch are dangerous, a source of future trouble. They set example of talking disrespectfully about people in office, the church, too. It is a *bad* example! I do not think it wise to let it go on. Words precede acts, you know."

"What would you suggest?"

"Well, censorship is not effective, evidently."

It occurred to Alexander upon the moment that a secret literature was now circulating in manuscript. He had read it, too, some of it, with a guilty joy.

"You see," Arakcheiev went on, "it is this habit of treating men of affairs *lightly — with disrespect.*" He was careful not to mention the merry lampoon which Alexis Sergiewitch had written about him. He had a different plan in mind, and one which he felt would win. "Because of the universal restlessness of people, since the war, when the country is like a sea trying to regain quiet after a prolonged storm, measures taken must be not only swift, but *effective.*"

Alexander became thoughtful. While his face was still calm and untroubled, the winning smile about his lips had disappeared.

"He might be put in the fortress of Peter and Paul —"

"You mean?"

"Yes, Your Majesty, Alexis Sergiewitch —"

"*Ah* —"

"And there, cold, lack of food— well, various accidents *might* happen. Life, Your Majesty, is uncertain" — looking intently at him with his penetrating, deep-set eyes.

Why could they not give him a chance to spare them, these gay young men of genius, with whom he was in sympathy! Why could they not confine their interest to letters — and let the government alone!

"But we cannot *suppress* — our men of mind, our men of ability. What would the rest of Europe say of us?"

"The rest of Europe, Your Majesty, need not know what happens in Russia. That is only for Your Majesty — for me. It is the business of papers to print what they are told. *Facts* should have nothing to do with *news — that is,* if facts are not as we wish them."

"*You*" and "*we.*" That made him an accomplice to deeds he did not like to contemplate, much less be a party to.

Arakcheiev divined his thoughts. "We cannot always spare our feelings — especially when the welfare of the nation is at stake." This suggestion was fortunate on his part. Certainly

governing was the most unpleasant constitutional amusement in the world.

Alexander had no personal inclination to be cruel. Besides, he reasoned, if you cut off the top of a plant, its roots will strike out more vigorously underneath. He knew also that important events frequently have trifling causes. This swept him in another direction. His broad, his philosophical outlook was banishing, as usual, the individual point at issue.

"All these boyish thinkers," Arakcheiev continued, "are, as none know so well as Your Majesty, merely the late offshoots of the French Revolution, attempting to strike deep root, in a productive and unworn soil. If they are not destroyed at the start, Your Majesty, and in such a way that there can be no recurrence, it is probable that, *in time*, there will be another Revolution here."

Aside from fear of revolution, Arakcheiev hated daring thinkers. He was sullenly on the watch to turn his fanatics loose upon them.

Arakcheiev was as cruel at heart as Photius, but he was more intelligent. His mind was not of a high order. At the same time, in a way, he was a man of some brain power. He had made commendable changes in the army. He had reorganized successfully the artillery. His thinking, however, and his governmental helpfulness usually took the form of detail.

"Your Majesty must not fail to take into consideration, too, that this is the first outbreak of the revolutionary spirit *in the north* of Europe, if we except the comparatively recent student uprising in Prussia — which they were wise enough to put down upon the moment. We cannot look upon it any other way than this — that it is our duty, *to humanity*, no matter what our individual inclinations may be, to suppress the young traitors. Since they are Russians, *we* are responsible."

This was a gentle reminder of the murder of Alexander's protégé and spy, Kotzebue, by the Prussian students, and a possible threat, therefore, to him. Arakcheiev meant this: *If you do not do it, the fate of Kotzebue will be yours.* But Alexander did not need to be reminded. With the prophetic sensitiveness of his

far-seeing, supple mind, he had sensed approaching the dangerous might of an army of the people, the unlettered, the masses, somewhere within the future. He had felt it coming nearer and nearer, as we feel occasional chill breaths of wind from a distant storm. It was something cold, something cruel, shivering the safe surface of the present. He knew that it was on the way. But, as his custom was, he had communicated this thought to no one. Now that Arakcheiev expressed it, however, it had added weight, because it echoed his unuttered convictions. It fell upon him with the force of memory.

"One by one — Your Majesty — it would be best for them — *to disappear*. No one will ever know — *except us*, what became of them. It is our duty to our race." This "*us*" was the unfortunate word for Arakcheiev in the sentence he had uttered.

"Milorodovich, Your Majesty, Governor-General of the city, has reported young Pushkin to me not only for an 'Ode to Liberty,' but for an 'Ode to the Dagger,' because the two poems contain certain expressions against *Your Majesty* — which cannot in safety be permitted. Count Nesselrode, too, has spoken to me of his wild nature, his unruly tongue — and Count Benkendorf. Youth, as a rule, needs disciplining."

Alexander did not hasten to reply. He had always been inclined to overlook an attack against his personal self. This was not wholly bravery. It was the first beginning of a certain weariness, of a settled conviction that to care was useless. What must be, must be.

"Young Pushkin has no respect for anything!" Arakcheiev went on. "And, in addition, he is faithless to his friends. Now there is Karamsin, to give Your Majesty an example in point. You know that Karamsin has been a lifelong friend of his family. Pushkin has written and circulated an epigram in which he dubbed him, 'poet of the Knout.' And Schukowsky, Pushkin's dearest friend and his protector, he called day before yesterday, in a gambling club, '*a poet promoted to a court flunky.*' Daily he turns that bitter tongue of his loose upon some one of his benefactors — usually a man of position, too, in *government affairs*." Arakcheiev was watching the face of Alexander. But

not even he, as well as he knew him, could gauge accurately what was going on within.

Alexander had a liking for young Pushkin. His own cosmopolitan mental training, his extensive cultivation in his youth in Greek made him able to understand, to appreciate him. He had just read Pushkin's first published book, "Ruslan and Liudmilla." He had enjoyed it. He was proud of it as a product of his race. He was astonished, too, at its finished, its daring style. He was confronted with a manner of writing the Russian tongue that he had not seen, nor dreamed to be possible; a style literally woven of dew and sunlight. The verse had astonishing ease. He had not read anything possessing in the same degree this quality, except Attic Greek, and this it resembled more than a little, he knew. He appreciated the artistic excellencies. In young Pushkin's brain evidently now lay limpidly, and ready for future unfolding, a store of noble visions. These were qualities which Arakcheiev, of course, could not understand. He was ignorant in such things. He was unable to judge.

But Arakcheiev was an opponent to be reckoned with. He had cunningly kept his strongest weapon for the last. It was not his purpose to argue, but to conquer. He understood, as well as any one could, the shifting, secretive nature of the man with whom he was dealing. He knew, too, that Alexander was changing rapidly, and it was not easy to measure accurately either the degree or the direction of the change. Therefore the effect for himself and his private plans was uncertain. He knew that Alexander secretly revolted against things he was forced to do. An impulse, to move him strongly, must be an impersonal one or one of nobility. No motive, purely of self, could do it.

"Here is another example, Your Majesty, of Pushkin's ability to set something going. It may, of course, be unintentional. I do not say that it is not. Last week, in a gambling club he frequents, some one mentioned the name of that worthy nobleman, Your Majesty's friend, Count Michael Woronzow, whom Your Majesty has made Governor of Bessarabia, with Your Majesty's customary rightness of choice. Pushkin began to sing at the top of his voice:

Half my lord, half tradesman, half sage, and half dunce,
Here's a hope that he'll wish to be whole for this once.

Of course, then, the others joined in. They ridiculed Woronzow!"

Alexander's left eyebrow curved upward. Arakcheiev knew that he had succeeded, and beyond his hope. This was the only mark of external emotion the exquisite person opposite was known to show. Alexander's mind became instantly active. Count Michael Woronzow was the most faithful, devoted servant a sovereign ever had. He was a rock of reliability. Alexander, who was known to despise his fellow-men, was forced to respect him. Short-bodied, insignificant-looking, snub-nosed, inelegant, Woronzow possessed a great, a noble soul. He led the self-abnegatory life of a martyr. A lifetime, and a fortune, this little old man had spent in southern Russia, trying to make the desert bloom like the rose. Over barren, uncounted miles, his short legs had tramped stubbornly, patiently, planting the olive, the vine, the orange, for other men and other years to reap the fruit, to enjoy. He asked nothing for himself. He gave all to his fatherland. He had built cities. He had developed commerce. He had opened seaports along the Black Sea. He had been one of the men to build Odessa. He had kept out plagues and infections. He had even paid entire regiments out of his own pocket.

What stories he had heard of him! Officers, returning briefly to Petersburg on leave of absence, related eloquently how in the continuous warfare against the unconquerable Mohammedan tribes of the Caucasus, when the little old man used to sit down to rest upon a tree-stump, he would take out his dirty notebook calmly, while the bullets were flying and hissing around him, and carefully make out a list of medicines which his soldiers needed, to be sent for on the next ship from Odessa to Marseilles — or order new ball-gowns for the frail, lovely, but ungrateful woman who bore his name. Bravely, too, he had opposed Napoleon. Alexander's heart swelled with sympathy, with indignation.

Arakcheiev was too wise to speak and run the risk of disturbing this meditation which he had so carefully set in action. Instead he began to count. So many pictures first. Then so many chairs: four in front of the desk and one behind it. So many pens. So

many piles of paper: one on one end of the table and one on the other. He had done this dozens of times before. But in periods of doubt and forced inaction he fell back upon the comfortable reliability of figures. When in doubt, count. Just as he finished the last addition, Alexander was recalling a parting word of Metternich: "*Woronzow is a very right-minded Russian.*"

The names of Metternich and Arakcheiev frequently occurred to him at the same time, as dissimilar as these two men were, because they both gave him the same pleasant feeling of stability, of decision, which he could not easily procure for himself. At length he spoke.

"I comprehend the importance of what you say. Later in the day — I will send a message to you at the Ministry."

Arakcheiev showed no inclination to push further the discussion. He knew how to let well-enough alone. He knew he had won.

"How are things going on your estate?"

"Well — Your Majesty — *well!* I am planning a hospital now — for the people; and a training school for special workers." He understood that things like these pleased the Emperor. Then he arose, took up his rough, dark-gray coat lined with yellow fox fur, bent his head humbly in salutation, and backed out, servile, obedient.

After the door closed upon Arakcheiev, it seemed to Alexander, suddenly, that he and young Alexis Sergiewitch were alike in a peculiar, nameless kind of misfortune. They were two lonely, somewhat helpless figures, opposing each other dumbly, but understandingly, across a vast area of disturbance.

His melancholy was increasing as it usually did at the end of prolonged meditation. Now it occurred to him that, in spite of his unlimited power, he seldom had anything the way he wished it. He had always believed in peace. What was the result? Up to the year 1815 he had signed more decrees for war than any former ruler of his country in the same length of time. He admired young Alexis Sergiewitch. More, he liked him — *and yet* —

He began to consider the case of Alexis Sergiewitch. As usual

he sought a subtlety that would appease Photius and Arakcheiev, in some degree satisfy them, uphold the dignity of the ruling class by defending it, and at the same time preserve intact, for his own pleasure, his customary, enigmatic position.

He had listened to what Arakcheiev and Photius had said. He had seemed to agree with them without the committal of words. But he had put off the hair-splitting delicacy of decision.

Arakcheiev was not so dull as Alexander might think. When he left and walked briskly away toward the Ministry, he realized afresh how few could understand him. There was not a single member of his suite, who saw him daily, who could do it any better than he, Arakcheiev, he thought proudly. Not one of them could form a reasonable guess of what was going on within the ruler's head.

Arakcheiev then decided that the most difficult combination there is, is sensitiveness, combined with subtlety. On top of both these, he knew was Alexander's suspiciousness. He did not trust any one but himself, unless it might be Count Woronzow. His training had helped to make him more suspicious, and his self-control was something colossal. This doubled the burden of life upon him.

Alexander's meditation ended in his deciding to exile Alexis Sergiewitch. He would send him to Bessarabia. There he would put him under the care of Woronzow, whom he could trust. This would serve several purposes at one time. It would get him away from the city and its dangers. It would separate him from plotting companions. It would save his life probably, and at the same time temporarily satisfy the ones who were clamoring for his punishment.

He sent a note to Arakcheiev to this effect. He added to the note the recommendation that in the army camps it would be well to keep the soldiers busy at some kind of work. This expressed the unuttered fear of what might happen if they had full time in which to plot. In short, it was a measure of safety against them, the equal of that against Pushkin.

When this was written he called a servant. He sent word to the Empress that he would join her at tea at the usual time.

An hour later he was bending over her hand with courtly grace and saying: "I ordered your room filled with forget-me-nots today, my dear, because outside is still our misty, chill cold — although the calendar declares it is spring. I wished you to be the first to enjoy the spring."

The large, somewhat childish eyes that looked up to thank him, were just the color of the flowers. They showed that she was glad to see him.

She led him joyously across to her work-table to show him a turquoise upon which she was engraving his profile. His eyes followed with pleasure the slender figure, in white, trailing lace, whose heavy mass of golden hair seemed too great a weight, that was preceding him.

Elizabeth Alexandra was forty, but there was that something about her still girlish, which is felt sometimes in the presence of unmarried women, or women of great chastity.

He examined the turquoise with apparent interest, as if there was nothing else in the world of more importance at that moment. His manner was unfettered and happy.

Then he followed her over to the small, curving-backed, ivory-hued, satin sofa, near the window, where she always sat to pour tea. The boudoirs of women gave him pleasure. They called to that which was feminine within his own nature. It was a sort of going home of the spirit, so to speak. He watched the two small hands, with the huge gems upon them, fluttering over the priceless porcelain, the silver, and the graceful figure, with its sloping shoulders and long, slender neck. When the tea was poured, and the little round biscuits passed, she began to talk, to gossip, about what her women in waiting had told her, and the ladies of the court. She had heard a scandal about the immoral life of that negro poet, Pushkin. His immorality, she declared, was extraordinary even in a city noted, like Petersburg, for its immorality. She heard he spent his nights in debauchery.

Elizabeth Alexandra was something of a puritan. The provincial notions of the petty German courts where she had lived still clung to her. There was a certain lack of flexibility in her nature, too. She could not accommodate herself easily to fresh points of

view. She urged the Emperor to restrain him. Then she repeated a witticism of Pushkin's which she had heard:

> In Russia there is no law,
> Only a post, and on it a crown.

To her surprise Alexander laughed. He tried to make her understand that Alexis Sergiewitch was a merry, harmless boy, with a kind heart. "He is no more dangerous, my dear, than our good-looking Baratinsky, or Prince Odojewsky, whom the women find agreeable. There is no malice in him. He is having a good time, because he has made his début as a poet, and the world is applauding him."

He treated her like a child, but like a spoiled child whom one must not cross. She asked him if the wheels of government were running smoothly, or if he were burdened with work, with worry. The voice that replied was tender and alluring. He asured her that everything was exactly as he desired.

When he arose to go, he explained that unfortunately he would not be able to dine with her to-night, but that he had commanded Count Alexis Orlow, whom he knew to be an agreeable companion, to take his place. He trusted she would enjoy herself.

He bent and lifted her hand to his lips and kissed it. When she looked up to meet his eyes in farewell, she noticed how like the sky they were; deep, serene, where no one could see to the depths. For a fleeting instant she wished, plaintively, that he were less exquisite and more human. When the door closed, and he had gone, the lovely solitude of luxury seemed more lonely, and the eyes of the flowers were just as comprehensible as those of the man who had left.

Outside he hastily told his orderly to make ready a sleigh, that did not bear the royal arms, and with the swiftest horses. His relief from the burden of his great position, and its boredom, which his secretive nature did not permit him to share, was the swift feet of horses, or the arms of women.

Like the lightning, his black, silent, somber, muffled figure sped through the wide, dark streets which were silent and secretive like his soul. The cold, gray-slipping Neva kept its secrets.

The fortress of Peter and Paul, which he was passing now, with its dungeons beneath the level of the water, kept its secrets, too, and did not tell. The long, gray, massive administration building where Arakcheiev and Count Benkendorf presided, never gave to the world a truthful account of its cruel or its unjust decrees.

Outside the city the chill, wet night wrapped him about like a swathing veil. Spring had not reached as far north as this. About him spread the silent, secretive velvet of the snow. The wind that whipped about his ears still kept the loneliness of night and winter.

But this refreshed him, rested him, this beating up against the unconquered, brutal North. He drew strength from its untamed contact. When the dripping horses were taken back to the stable again, Alexander sought the hard soldier's cot, in a little room adjoining the cabinet, and, without undressing, threw himself upon it and slept soundly until day.

In the middle of the night a slender figure, completely enveloped in gray veils, seemed to float rather than walk down the cold, windy corridors, floated through great door after great door, which was opened softly by a servitor who neither looked up nor spoke, until at length the room of the Emperor was reached. Here she opened the door timidly and looked in. "*Ah! yes!* He is here. Then he is not with *her* to-night." Softly, silently, the gray-draped figure floated back again through the same long corridors, to the room where artificial heat was closing too soon the drooping eyes of blue forget-me-nots.

CHAPTER III

THE JOURNEY SOUTH

ALEXIS SERGIEWITCH slept until past midday. A pale, fat servant girl, two stiff blue ribbons floating behind from her cap, was bringing him a belated breakfast, and arranging it upon the table, when Schukowsky entered, somewhat hurriedly and without ceremony.

"Come in! Come in, Vassili Andrejewitch!" called young Pushkin gladly. Then he happened to remember a merry and none too respectful epigram he had given expression to about his friend the day but one before. His sensitive, expressive face changed. Vassili Andrejewitch stood looking at him with kind, questioning eyes. He guessed easily the subject of his thoughts. It amused him.

"I did not *mean* anything — Vassili Andrejewitch — I mean — *disrespectful* — "

Schukowsky, who was twenty years older than Pushkin, was still smiling at him indulgently. The older man not only understood him, but he liked him sincerely.

"In the couplet — I improvised about you the other day —"

"Do not worry about it — dear little brother, Alexis Sergiewitch — I know you did not — "

Pushkin interrupted him. "I do not know what makes me say the things I do, Vassili Andrejewitch. It is not my heart, God knows it is not! It is as if my tongue went careering along without either head or heart" — looking up at him like a child, ingenuously.

"Forget it — dear little brother Alexis Sergiewitch! *Forget it!* I understand. It is just the superabundant energy of a poet in the flood tide of his years. I understand! I understand."

Pushkin gave him a grateful look and moved toward the table.

"Eat with me, Vassili Andrejewitch?"

"Thanks — no. Go ahead."

"Just a glass of tea?"

"No."

Schukowsky waited until the meal was finished, walking restlessly about in the little room.

"Anything up, Vassili Andrejewitch?" Pushkin questioned as he finished, pushed his plate and tea-glass back, turning his boyish face toward the older man. "How is your long poem coming on — 'The Wandering Jew'?"

"Well — *so-so*," a somewhat distrait voice replied, as if he had lost interest in it.

"Did you bring it? I'd like to hear it, Vassili Andrejewitch."

"No — not to-day."

"Why did n't you?"

"Time enough."

"But what is the matter with to-day?" — feeling dimly, through the dull lassitude of late sleeping and preceding weeks of dissipation, something important withheld within the mind of Schukowsky.

Schukowsky looked at the pale, eager face with the tangled, pale curls above it, much as a father would have looked. The sensitive Pushkin felt it. He was aware of it in the same way that one is aware of the soft touch of slipping sunlight.

Schukowsky went on speaking from the propelling impulse of his own thoughts. "Early this morning, I gave a Russian lesson to the wife of the Grand Duke Nicholas. I found out while I was in the palace — no matter how! You know the underground routes by which news travels in Russia — that there was a meeting of the two societies — last night — Northern and Southern. It has been reported — pretty generally — that it was really a *revolutionary meeting* — with the ultimate object of overthrowing the government —"

Schukowsky paused. Pushkin looked frightened. He waited nervously for him to go on. He felt that what he had feared greatly the night before had really come true.

"Were you there, Alexis Sergiewitch?" sternly, with a sharp accent of displeasure.

"Yes," was the answer, looking straight toward the black, slanting, Mongolian shaped eyes of Schukowsky.

"Well — it seems that that German poet, Klinger — whose writing the wife of the Grand Duke Nicholas admires so — because she is German, too — sent in a report. Your name was mentioned as one of the leaders of the plot — *against the Emperor*. Klinger left for his home in Germany to-day — and stepped nimbly out of the affair."

"I was there — Schukowsky. But I opposed the plot — God knows I did! I swear it to you upon my honor. I left the meeting — on that account. Klinger told that lie because he hates me. His is a mischief-making race! There is *some* professional jealousy in it, too, *on his part* — of course."

"The fat is in the fire. The whole story, with I do not know how many additions, has gone to Count Benkendorf, Arakcheiev — and the Emperor. Those upon whom the blame fell hardest were men — of the nobility —"

"Well?" — in surprise, looking more and more frightened.

"You are to be punished — I hear — *exiled* —"

"What for? What have I done?"

"I do not know; that is, not exactly."

"Are you sure, Vassili Andrejewitch?"

"Do not worry! *Do not worry!* In his heart the Emperor likes you. Always remember that, Alexis Sergiewitch" — solemnly. "Whatever is done will be ultimately — for your own good. So do not rebel."

"Vassili Andrejewitch" — in a trembling voice — "The instant I reached here last night, I wrote a letter to Ryleiev, refusing to have anything more to do with the society. They tried to make me join it."

"Good! Now write another letter just like it, explaining that act on your part, and give it to me. *Be quick!* Address it to me."

Pushkin wrote the letter as he was told. Schukowsky put it into his pocket and out of sight. "Hurry, now! Go through all your papers — just as rapidly as possible. Burn, right here in this stove, everything that could get you into trouble. I will help you."

"Why, Vassili Andrejewitch, you do not think it will come *so soon*, do you?" — in a frightened voice.

"You know the decrees of Alexander! Do they not usually fall without warning?" Pushkin complied sadly, feeling as if he were walking in his sleep, but not doubting for a moment the wisdom of Schukowsky's advice. "I tried to find you night before last to tell you to avoid meetings of the kind — for a while. Where in the world were you?"

Pushkin stuffed a package of papers hurriedly into the stove, then he put his mouth gayly to Schukowsky's ear. It was a great name he whispered, which he dared not utter aloud.

"Why do you take such risks — you foolish boy? Do you want a sword run through your body?"

Alexis Sergiewitch did not seem to hear. Happy memory for a moment shut off the present, with its worry and its disagreeable demands. "She has the loveliest *feet* — Vassili Andrejewitch. Picture to yourself — that great palace on the Morskoi — her room — *at night*. The flowers — the dancing light of candles — over coverlets of satin, and *her* — with *only* — Schukowsky, *she* —"

The amorous confidence was interrupted harshly. "Yes, Monsieur Pushkin is within," the voice of the fat, pale servant-girl replied.

A *feldjäger* entered. He placed his two feet together crisply, bowed, and handed out a sealed paper. They both knew what had come. It was hardly worth the trouble of reading. It explained that Alexis Sergiewitch was transferred to work under the direction of Count Woronzow in Kishenev, Bessarabia. In an hour he must start. No books, no papers of any kind, could be taken with him. He was forbidden to communicate, before he left, with any one in the city. He was to write no letters. The message came direct from Count Benkendorf.

The *feldjäger* had left immediately after delivering the letter. Two servants, however, of the government came in to remain until the moment of departure. Both Alexis Sergiewitch and Schukowsky knew that this meant exile under the polite guise of change of work. Luckily the letters and papers were burned be-

fore the arrival of the message. There was nothing telltale left.

"It was more than decent of you, Vassili Andrejewitch —" Pushkin began somewhat shamefacedly, as together they set about packing his clothes.

"Do not think of it," interrupted Schukowsky.

"*But it was* — after that couplet, *especially*. Makes me ashamed of myself — damned if it don't — when I see how much bigger your nature is than mine. Do not forget that I appreciate how decent it was — Vassili Andrejewitch — *will you?*"

They packed on in silence, trying, in a short time, and finding it impossible, to cram in the young dandy's extensive wardrobe. Pushkin was downcast and confused. He was like a little child, and did whatever Schukowsky told him.

The sleigh was at the door. The two men on guard within arose obediently to escort him. Just as the driver was preparing to lift his whip, Pushkin leaned again toward Schukowsky.

"Write to mother for me, Vassili Andrejewitch. Tell her I'll send a letter myself from Kishenev, as soon as I can. And — *Schukowsky — if* you should see any one else — *explain* —" The great gray eyes looked pleadingly out of the youthful face. Schukowsky understood readily enough that "*any one else*" meant the lady of the boudoir in the palace of two nights ago.

Schukowsky promised indulgently, and smiled to himself, because he knew that his impressionable young friend would forget about the lady in question before he reached the third post station.

"Try to live wisely, dear little brother Alexis Sergiewitch! *God be with you* —" he called after him, with a sudden outburst of emotion, as the sleigh disappeared from sight, in the thick yellow-black mists of spring.

When Alexis Sergiewitch saw the open country spread its cold desolation before him, he tried to turn about, in order to take one last, farewell look at the luxurious city which has been unkind to Russia's men of genius. But no such thought as this occurred to him. It was already indistinguishable now, a black blur. He could not see it because the mists had swept in so thick between. Instead of taking farewell of the city, he was saying farewell, in

his heart, to happy, care-free years, when he had been the spoiled child of that capricious, dissipated aristocracy and its beautiful, idle women; a farewell really to untrammeled, careless youth.

For days the extraordinarily swift feet of Russian horses had been carrying him steadily southward, on that smooth, wide *chaussée*, the finest in all Europe, which leads from Petersburg to Moscow. This road starts proudly, eloquently, toward the warmth, the fervor of the south. Straight away it leads, a line vigorous and white under the light; an imperious road that rushes onward with a sort of zest, as if it might lead to conquest.

Alexis Sergiewitch did not arouse himself sufficiently from the sad moroseness that enveloped him, to look about, or to take note of his surroundings. It was sadly disturbing, this exile, because it was so sudden, so unexpected. And he had been having such a good time. It was unpleasant to be snatched away in a moment from his friends, his pleasures, with this quick, harsh uprooting of life.

The order had been given to go with speed. They moved onward, therefore, with rapidity while the dull, wet landscape slipped past on either side. Too few hours were given for sleep at the different post stations, so Alexis Sergiewitch slept on a part of the day. He slept sitting upright, his youthful body swaying supply with the motion of the vehicle. In these days of sleep and a sort of dazed subconsciousness, he merely remembered dully dawn after dawn, gleaming yellowly across many leagues of unknown land. But the fresh air, the absence of excitement, drink, dissipation, the prolonged rest, in short, were having their effect, and reburnishing with vitality his body, elastic with youth.

"It is lucky we made the change, Fedor. Look ahead!" exclaimed the driver one day, pointing with his blunt whip-end for the companion who was really sent to guard him. The words rang refreshingly in young Pushkin's ears.

"What change?" questioned Alexis Sergiewitch, suddenly becoming aware of his surroundings.

"Can't you see, yourself? The snow is gone!" was the surly and none too polite reply. To be sure, the sledge had given place to a *kibitka*, and the *kibitka* had been exchanged for a *troika*.

They were on wheels now, and the three horses made their speed even greater. The face of his guard was pale, cruel, and dull. Evidently he was a Livonian. Pushkin disliked him instinctively. His eyes were hard and light. The lashes that shaded them were perfectly white. He was unpleasant to look at. He avoided him.

No one understood better than Count Benkendorf how to select a jailer, for that was what he really was, a reliable jailer who could not be bribed, and who could act with swiftness, with decision, should the occasion require. There would be no use in thinking of getting away from this man. There was nothing to do but submit.

But the snow was gone! That was something to be glad of. He drew a deep breath of relief. He felt happier. It was as if a gentler world had come with its vanishing. No longer did he feel that bitter wind upon his face, that bends the black pine boughs in the North, and that sings with the shrillness of sorrow. The melancholy of the North was giving way.

He looked about. He saw wet, newly green, smiling fields, which the vanishing snow had left burnished and bright; patches of bushes, still unleaved, of a dull, rust-red; the burnt-orange of bare soil, and far away the ripple of an horizon swept with the wine-hued purple of distance.

In the center of chosen places, where the sweet green was freshest, were the roof lines of little villages. He said to himself, thinking of proud Petersburg at the moment, that to humble places spring comes first, and with greatest splendor. He looked at them with youthful, receptive eyes. These little villages, he observed, were almost all just alike: two long rows of wooden houses, a street between, with the gable ends of the houses turned toward the road. Pictures like these, strung upon the long brown road he was traveling, were passing continually before his eyes.

This awakening world of nature, which he had not taken the time to observe before, because he was usually accompanied by a crowd of noisy, talkative friends, began to stimulate him. He set about observing the scenes before him, with sympathy and interest.

They were just beginning to enter the broad, fertile rye-fields of Muscovy. What a distance they had driven! The season was advanced down here. The spring was early. The bustle of the warm, merry outdoor days was at hand. The fields were animated. They were pleasant to look upon. The broad spaces were dotted as far as he could see with workers. Blond peasant girls were busy on the land. As the driver paused to repair a slight injury to the axle of the right front wheel, one who had a long braid of flaxen hair, and who happened to be working near the road, could be heard singing lustily while she worked.

Come . . . beautiful spring!
. . . . .
. . . . .
with fruitfulness —
Over the forest. . . .
. . . . .
Under the white moon!

Alexis Sergiewitch listened with enjoyment. He liked to look at her, too. She was blond and golden like the spring. And she was young — like himself. "How rich, how musical is our Russian tongue!" he thought. He was surprised he had not thought of it before. It is really nobler than French, he affirmed proudly, influenced upon the moment by anything that pleased him, swaying easily to the sensitive adaptability of his nature.

And there ahead! Why, Moscow was there! Was it possible? And in so brief a time! How rapidly they had driven! How it enticed the eyes! Bright hues in squares, circles, triangles, and above it crosses, the bright tremble of gold prayers. It was a huge piece of gay, sparkling embroidery flung across the monotonous, level rye-fields. He could hardly believe his eyes. He could hardly believe that they had come so far. They had covered the ground in those days of sleep of his as if by magic. He saw dimly, but recognized, because he knew them so well, the red-white mist that marked the Donskoi Convent — the ancient battlements of the Devitschei — and the wide, fertile plain beyond, where twinkled the winding Moskva. The outline was typically Russian. Alexis Sergiewitch remembered that one of the Italian

architects who had helped build the city had been named Fioravente (flower in the wind). And that was just what it looked like from the distance from which he was now viewing it, a monstrous bouquet of huge-petaled flowers suddenly made stationary in space, and changeless. It belonged to the old gay night of Slavic fable and monstrous faith.

The Moscow which Alexis Sergiewitch now saw before him, on his road to exile, was the new Moscow, which Russian enterprise and patriotism had rebuilt after the dramatic conflagration which marked Napoleon's approach and the beginning of his downfall. It was therefore a proud monument to revolt against aggression and autocracy.

It was in truth a marvelous city, in outline, for the eye. It thrilled him. He loved to look at it. They were so near now he could distinguish easily the gold crosses on the great churches. He knew that beneath these crosses there were shining half-moons, which boasted to every beholder that here Islam had met defeat. The city was a proud testimonial to the faith of his race, and an eloquent one.

Now they entered. Bright buildings swept swiftly past him. Above his head he saw a wild, double-headed eagle, which seemed to be looking suspiciously just now toward both the east and the west. They passed the Kremlin, that stupendous monument to Slavic genius, which the peasants call "*the white stone-built, the gold-domed.*"

Moscow was home, in a way, to Alexis Sergiewitch. It was good to be here again. It renewed former pleasant sensations. The current of his thoughts changed. He felt that he would like to find out if his family were still in the city, where they had passed the winter as usual in social pleasures, or if, the spring being so early, they had gone to one of their country estates, perhaps Mikhailowsky. But there was no way to find out. Not for anything would he ask a favor of this pale-eyed Livonian jailer who had been set to watch him, and whom he had disliked at sight. Not for the world would his pride risk refusal from an inferior like him.

As they dashed noisily onward, through street after street, to

the hostelry assigned them, and the low sun sent its late rays to light the towers, the walls, of strangely formed buildings, frequently painted a wild and savage red, he felt proud of his ancient city. It occurred to him speedily that it takes something besides money to build a city of charm like this. The petulance and pride of kings is necessary, the caprice of autocrats, something, in short, altogether removed from the reasoned reliability of democracy, or of republican institutions. They, the latter, make serviceable buildings; autocrats make lovely ones. There are certain grandeurs that can belong only to a monarchy, he decided. And he smiled faintly, so speedily did change influence him, as he remembered those foolish young enthusiasts for republicanism whom he had left behind in Petersburg.

Shut up alone that night in his room in the hostelry, without the changing interest of the journey to enliven him, he began to be homesick and sad. He chafed under restraint.

He would like to see the old town home in Moscow, where they had lived in a sort of faded, pretentious splendor; rare furnishings from abroad in one room, and in the next, rough, rush-bottomed chairs made by their own peasants, and where they used to entertain in such a princely manner.

Was his mother in Moscow to-night, he wondered? She had not loved him greatly, perhaps, although they had been merry enough together, but still to-night he longed to see her. Then he had a quick vision of her as he saw her last, having her fortune told, which was one of the things of which she never tired. She was standing under two tall poplars by the edge of the flower garden, on the south side of the house where the ragged pinks grew, a slender, gray-eyed mulatto, whose face showed plainly her negro blood. Her head with the thick, dry, curling, unruly hair, which was of a color no one could name, and which must be designated merely blond-ashen, was bent in rapt attention, toward the short, black, gypsy girl who knelt in front of her and held her palm. She wore a pale-blue dress, trimmed with long, slender points of inset white lace. Her eyes were happy and attentive. They were large and round and gray, like his own, where the white showed unnaturally, and within them there was an expres-

sion that was un-Russian. Her face was the yellow, gray-white of the mulatto. And she was so astonishingly thin. Her shoulders were high, sharp, like old Egyptian statues of black basalt. He could see just how the line of them lifted the soft, blue silk of her gown. How happy she had been that day, and absorbed in the fortune-telling! The picture persisted strangely. She cared only for pleasure, idleness, and she had no sense of responsibility nor duty. His sister Olga — He longed to see her the most. He loved her. They were sympathetic and fond of each other. His brother Leo was probably drunk to-night as usual. His father was drinking wine and reading Molière, or gossiping, if he could find any one about the house who was not already worn out with his tongue, and who would listen. His uncle Vassili, his father's brother, was very likely correcting bad verses, in a ragged writing-pad, placed on top of his knee.

Arína Rodiónovna — his nurse — *Ah!* there was his real mother! He felt a pulse of real contrition now. But what was the use! He was a prisoner. It did not make any difference what he wished to do. He could not see them to-night. And he could not even make a guess when the time would come that he could. Who could estimate the length of his exile?

When they rattled away from Moscow the next morning, just as the sun was coming up, they turned sharply toward the southwest, toward a new world, which he, who had had no opportunity to travel, had not entered. He looked forward to it with enthusiasm, with interest. He was developing a little of the traveler's zest for novelty.

For days and days what he saw most vividly now and kept the pleasantest memory of was the rich, kaleidoscopic passing of the old centers of Slavic civilization, the early strongholds of his race, his faith; picturesque cities, most of them, he observed; all more or less alike, showing where the Orient had taken its last poignant farewell of the Occident. Rapidly Alexis Sergiewitch drove through them one after the other. Many of them had been walled cities in an earlier, more warlike day. In the distance, as he approached them, they showed bunched cupolas, gay domes, like beds of budded tulips fantastically colored and capricious of

line. Frequently they rose out of the plain upon a group of little fat, round hills, beside the shore of dull, sluggish rivers that reflected them grudgingly, all keeping something of the solemn atmosphere of mediæval days, of protest against influences new or un-Russian. They were usually imposing when seen from a distance, and he liked to look at them. They made him vaguely happy. Some of them fascinated him. He wished he could have the liberty to explore them. And the sunsets down here in the South, across lonely levels, when they had left for a day the cities behind! They were something grand and not easily to be forgotten. They swept his soul with joy, and a keen, almost feverish desire for things new and unattainable. More and more daily here the level distances were becoming disconcerting, the horizon more and more variable, and more readily effaced. He gained the impression of rich, peopled spaces, which he knew nothing about, and over which he longed to travel.

The cold, deathlike, unpleasant smell of wetness left by melting snow was gone. The ground, the trees, were clothed again in vivid garments of green, and his boyish heart throbbed responsively with pleasure. The errant air was warm.

Broad spaces in front of him became busy with a life he had not seen before, and which interested him. Those marvelous migratory merchants of the South, the *tschoumaks*, heading their own caravans, stretched out in long, black, wavering lines. Tents sprang up anywhere as if by magic. Hungry herds, freed from the prison of winter, moved lightly and happily in the sunny spaces. Cranes circled above his head their long deferred but annual flight. The forests were no longer black and frowning. Farm gardens showed splashes of variegated, smiling green. Pale, tangled willows, still vibrant from the storms of night, were swinging at dawn their wild green hair beside the brooks he was crossing. In short, spring had arisen, resplendent, over the steppe.

The space they had covered now was great, at the speed they had been making. Alexis Sergiewitch had been traveling what seemed to him a long time. But it was no wonder because even from Tchernigow to Kiev, here in the South, was five stations.

He first saw the sacred ancient city far ahead, when the road took a sharp turn, perched upon its mile-long, rocky hill. It resembled a painted, penitential picture out of some missal of the past. It looked like the chromos with their pensive reds and yellows that hang sometimes upon peasant walls. The melancholy of the North was fast giving way to a different spirit, the more expansive spirit of the South. He felt this first markedly in Kiev, which is looked upon as a holy city, and which was the scenic background of his first important book, "Ruslan and Liudmilla." The sight of this venerable city charmed him. It was so different from Petersburg, which is set out in straight lines, like a stiff, military parade, where in the out-of-doors he had always felt something a little morose. He liked its crooked streets. Even the Dnieper seemed to feel the importance of the ancient place it passed, and became less noisy, less turbulent.

The rebellious feeling of being snatched away from his friends, his poetry-making, his love-making, his pleasures, in short, had disappeared with the snow. It had melted in the warm sun of the South. He had forgotten, in fact, all about them; even his new beauty of the dangerous night rendezvous; faithful Schukowsky; his young companions who were plotting and dreaming, foolishly, as he thought, of freedom; his neglected duties in the Foreign Office, everything, in short, in his facile habit of turning to whatever is new. He was glad he was here. He looked only ahead, and with delight.

Before him now the broad, inspiring steppe shone, where the wind is wild and free and tumbles with the grasses, where the sky grows bluer and the horizon broader. It was as if he had been swept suddenly along head first into grandeur, into space. He began to understand sympathetically the popular saying: *Free as a Cossack.*

Below mediæval Kiev of the religious past and archaic silhouette, the blessed land of freedom for the oppressed among men begins. The country from here south to the Black Sea was to old Russia what in an earlier day still New England, Massachusetts, had been to the Pilgrim Fathers, and other Europeans fleeing from religious and political persecution. He thought of all this

with zest. Before him lay a land of freedom, of mad dreams, of wild and untamed energy. And who was more fitted by nature to appreciate such things than Alexis Sergiewitch? It was as if it were a replica, indeed, of the spirit of his own soul. Almost all the cities and villages from here to the coast of the Black Sea — Mohilev, which he had just entered, Kishenev, and far away to the south on the shore, Rostov, Mariopol — had been founded by nameless fugitives. Here men had dared to think their own thoughts. Here men had dared to be free.

Even the rich and respected in these Southern cities, the merchants, the men of affairs, Alexis Sergiewitch knew, had been serfs two generations before. They had a different mental outlook, therefore, than men of noble blood; broader, more humanly elastic. These cities had been built and peopled by men who were strong and daring. There was something about them, too, of that spirit that makes the heyday of youth.

As he rolled through strange city after strange city, he sniffed this atmosphere sensitively, responsively, just as a spread sail sniffs the fresh, impelling sea wind. The land between the Dnieper and the Dniester is the land of freedom. He felt at once its stimulation of lawlessness, of rebellion. This had always been the blessed place of escape for the oppressed, and he thought merrily, with his accustomed nimbleness and levity of mind: "What are laws, anyway? Are they not just a corset, which no two nations wear tight in the same place?" He had something that resembled a woman's lack of respect for them. To his mind law was just a way to make trouble legitimately. This was a good country, indeed, in which to be. He was happy to be here. Here Heaven was high, and the Tsar was far off, and he was glad of it.

He was just passing the first *artel* and he was turning to look back, at this movable, out-of-door club-village, where fugitive serfs, escaped criminals sometimes, men in hiding for various causes, without acknowledged name or passport, lived throughout the warm season, and hired out as workmen on the great farms, the *meierhöfe*, whose comfortable, even luxurious, low dwelling-houses he was passing so frequently now. These houses

looked inviting, happy. He longed to enter. Through their wide, pleasant, sunny windows the great, free, steppe winds blew. Merry, noisy children were tumbling about in the yards in front of them. The picture was animated and attractive.

Broad, felt-hatted Moldavians, slow-moving and deliberate as Quakers, jogged by from time to time on fat horses. Or he saw them at a distance driving flocks of broad-backed, fat-tailed sheep. They wore long white woolen caftans. They were effective figures in the fields. Beside the road, grain and tobacco plantations outspread their fertile patchwork squares of differing hues.

There were little, noisy shops occasionally which were kept by talkative, bargaining Jews and Armenians in their long black caftans, and who are the world's greatest traders.

A dirty gypsy camp, a *tabor*, swung into view. From it Alexis Sergiewitch could hear the high, shrill notes of a violin, and sounds of gayety. All was animation down here, movement. And then came his first glimpse of Kishenev, the journey's end, the capital of Bessarabia, the province which Alexander had annexed to Russia. He looked at it eagerly, anticipatingly.

Kishenev at this date was a city of considerable extent, and some importance. Just as Petersburg was built upon islands and suggested Venice, Kishenev was built upon hills and suggested the situation of Rome. The hills lifted it to easy visibility for the approaching traveler. It was pleasant enough to look upon. It had long streets, and most of the modest dwellings stood in their own gardens, which Alexis Sergiewitch saw now, gay with the flowers of spring, grass, and with trees.

The Old Town — because there were two side by side — looked like an old woodcut. The buildings were shabby. They suggested lonely places far to the east. There were some old buildings, to be sure, in the new, more recently built sections, but not so many. The new section looked just like any town of Europe with nothing particularly distinctive to mark it. Some of the buildings were expensive and up to date. They were frequently painted in bright colors while the roofs were green. He saw little parks, where there were white columns, and an abundance of

flowers, and decorative shrubs. It was a pleasant picture from the rich, vineyard-covered hills they were rattling up and down so noisily. His boyish heart was expanding with the joy of novelty, of anticipation, and at the knowledge that if he must still have a jailer, it would no longer be this pale, stubborn-faced Livonian whose menacing silence nothing could break. He liked the looks of the Old Town as it swung nearer. It promised interesting places to explore. As they rattled through the streets he was surprised at the varied population; Italians, Greeks, Turks, Bulgarians, French, a generous sprinkling of gypsies, Armenians, and Jews.

Then the merry lampoons which he had improvised about Count Woronzow, with whom he would soon be face to face, occurred to him to depress him. Did he know about it, he wondered? And if he did, what did he think? But he remembered on fuller consideration that there was nothing to fear on his part from that, because Woronzow was a good deal like Schukowsky in that he was noble and forgiving. So he resigned himself with the flexibility of youth and looked out upon the green-squared city which now did not seem to be so large as he had thought when he first viewed it from a distance. It had the appearance of greater extent because most every little house had each its own garden and shading trees of acacia or poplar.

He wondered briskly what it would be like, this new life which he was about to begin in this far city of the South, toward which he had been journeying so long. What would it hold for him? Did Fate have something important up her sleeve here? And when would he be permitted to go back?

CHAPTER IV

ALEXANDER AND HIS DAUGHTER

ALEXANDER had been alone in his cabinet since daylight, reading state documents. Indeed, to his regret, nowadays, he seldom had a chance to read anything else. They filled his waking hours. His devotion to duty was so unusual that he made, without murmuring, the necessary sacrifice. The state had no more devoted slave nor overburdened serf than he. Indeed the old order of things of Russian sovereigns was in his case showing a peculiar reversal. Instead of Alexander taking everything away from the people, as they of old had sometimes done, the people were more and more taking away from him, and the most important of the things taken was happiness. He recalled, too frequently, the wise words of Napoleon: "You do not know what a mighty thing is happiness." (*Vous ne savez pas quelle puissance est la bonheur.*) It was true he did not know until he was beginning to lose it.

As he sat, reading document after document, there was a running accompaniment of unpleasant thoughts, of dawning consciousnesses, perhaps deferred fears, that he was unable to put away. In spite of his unlimited power, his proud position, his will was constantly thwarted. He seldom had his way. Concessions were wrung from him of which he did not approve, but could not at the moment find the proper means to resist.

It did not need the uneasy, provocative, evil whispering in his ear of Metternich to make him see from his lofty lookout position as ruler that the old Europe of the past, of kings and unquestioned power, of the supremacy of the leisure class, was beginning to topple, like a brittle, tall, porcelain pagoda, and that the day of a different kind of living was dawning.

His religion, however, forced him to believe that whatever God wills must be good. He did not presume to question it. Yet it was coming somewhat speedily, he thought, the destined change. He wondered nervously what it would do to the poor, unlettered,

helpless people of his too extensive land, and how much he, personally, might be held accountable, because of the bold proclamations of freedom of his generous but perhaps foolish boyhood. He had been at fault himself. He could see it now. Without knowing it he had been helping on the dissolution.

Perhaps now it would be better to put on the brakes, so to speak, and thus hinder, as best he was able, the too swift descent of the hill. The liberal thoughts of his youth were the property of the nation. He was no longer the intellectual leader which he had started out to be. It was the people now who were the leaders. A peculiar reversal, this, which he had not seen coming. And now it was here.

If liberty was a toy which his people, *his children*, were not capable of using just now, and with which they might wound themselves, it was his paternal duty to withhold, *for a time*, the toy. When they were ready for it, it would be time enough to give it to them. This meant the increasing of the number of spies. This meant punishments against whose rigor his gentle heart rebelled. This meant delegating a certain amount of power, which he could not always personally supervise, both to Count Benkendorf and Arakcheiev. This meant drawing tighter and tighter the reins of government, which had its dangers.

And they, the governed, could not know that what he was doing was merely a *temporary* expedient, based upon the desire to give them their fill of liberty in a safer future, which he hoped was near, and one less menaced by a world in revolt.

But how could he tell them so they would wait and be patient, they who knew nothing of political conditions at home, nor world conditions abroad, they who could not understand?

These were *stern curative measures*, like the amputation of a limb to prevent the spread of a pernicious ill. Forbidding Russians to travel abroad, import books, limiting carefully those permitted to be read, were, in their opinion, *protective, curative measures*, against the inroads of fresh mental maladies from neighboring countries. Along all these disagreeable roads, except that of the death penalty, Alexander had been pushed farther and farther, and always against his will, in the weak hope that a

change of conditions might lessen the need of proceeding. But with the concessions he had made there had been within him this basic thought: *It is only temporary. I will withdraw at the first opportunity.* Always his subtlety, his habit of concealment, made them feel the shadowy, threatening outlines of unknown territory, which they could neither measure accurately nor dominate. This caused a double vacillation: first, in him as ruler; second, in them, as his advisers and helpers. This vacillation reacted upon the people. It was felt dumbly by them.

There was dissatisfaction in the army, which had found life stale and in need of enlivening, back home again after the exciting entertainment of the wars. The soldiers could not settle down to the narrow humdrum which held no promise. Patriotism had changed to ennui. It missed the stimulus of war.

There had been an uprising in Great Novgorod. The Caucasus was restless. Something was brewing there. Tiflis had been invaded not so long ago. Turkey was warring on Greece. Poland could never long be relied upon.

He would have felt better if outside of Russia he could have looked out upon a calm and reassuring Europe. But this was not to be. In France, Louis XVIII, the old Bourbon, was tottering, rapidly now, to a not greatly regretted rest, and the political horizon was threatening.

Spain had won a constitution, from another Bourbon grown weak and incapable, with a dangerous shaking-up of government foundations and general discomfort. The weak hands of John the Fourth of Portugal had been forced to give up their hold upon that glorious, glowing, unexploited continent, South America, from which fabulous place ships returned with their scuppers awash with emeralds, with gold. Metternich, Alexander's evil genius, had just declared that Italy was no longer a political entity. In the Low Countries, his sister, Anna Pawlowa, might any day lose her throne. Sicily and Naples were in the direst straits. The German student bodies were clamoring for a constitution from a monarch who had forsworn his word. Austria, to be sure, under the watchful genius of Metternich, presented tentative peace. And England, with Metternich's hated arch-

fiend Canning its ruling providence, now at head of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, protected its national existence basely as usual; by sheltering the revolutionary mischief-makers of other nations in return for promises of peace and immunity. Surely a stormy political sea to contemplate, whence neither strengthening nor comfort could come to him.

But the political concessions which had been wrested from him one by one, unpleasant and self-depreciatory as they were, were not causing him the keen sense of present discomfort, of a certain domestic concession, it may be called, of the week before.

Alexander's children by the Empress Elizabeth were dead, in their infancy. He had only one child living, a daughter, Sophie, now eighteen, by his mistress of many years, Marie Antonova Narischkin, whose position in Petersburg society was hardly second to that of the Empress. His deep, trusting love for this woman, and for his daughter, was the one safe refuge of happiness in the confusion and slavery of his life. Their palace sheltered him as frequently as the Imperial Residence.

The husband of Marie Antonova, Dmitri Lvovitch Narischkin, bore from the crown the nominal title of *grand écuyer*, but he was almost never in Petersburg. His duties were delegated to another. In the merry but irreverent conversation of the envious onlookers upon the doings of a court, he was dubbed "King of the Corridors," while Marie Antonova herself was nicknamed the Russian La Vallière, with this difference (as a contemporary remarked) that she would do anything rather than become a nun.

Dmitri Lvovitch was an old man now, and not a bad one. He was a member of a distinguished family, who in the past had refused to be ennobled, which is the reason the name is not found in *le livre de velours*. His health was not too good just at present. He had been slightly paralyzed in fact, and one side of his face twitched violently, like the face of Peter the Great. The luxurious Petersburg palace over which Madam Narischkin presided was kept up, partly, with no ill-will by him, but its air of royal luxury, its wasteful surplus of liveried attendants, came from the too easily opened purse of Alexander. The "second family" of Alexander had become a matter of such long standing in Peters-

burg that it had ceased to be a subject for discussion among Russians. It was not the only "second family" of high rank in the city, where the title was not unfamiliar. The cosmopolitan fame of the city of the North had, in a way, rested upon its licentiousness, which no great pains was taken to conceal. And in Alexander's case it was considered merely as one of the necessary perquisites of power.

The undignified position of Dmitri Lvovitch Narischkin did not reflect especial discredit upon him. It did not lessen the personal respect in which he was held by his friends. They understood that it was a misfortune neither of his making nor continuing.

Marie Antonova herself was a Polish woman of noble but not of princely rank. She possessed in a high degree the fickle changeableness that characterizes her emotional race. She had black eyes, radiant, the kind one cannot see within; long, silky, luxuriant black curls that might have blazed upon the head of a Sultana, and that grew with a gracious caress upon her brow; a pink-and-white complexion; a mouth which close scrutiny showed to be somewhat shapeless, devoid of character; and a rather small, round, dimpled, soft, voluptuous body. She was forty now, but by some marvel she did not look a day over twenty. She wore, frequently, Grecian gowns of heavy white silk crêpe, which clung gracefully to her beautiful body. Her voice was low, sweet; her manner gentle, seductive, and caressing. There was something about her physically that helped to lull the little cares of Alexander to sleep, and to make him vaguely happy. For him her presence held a potential charm.

The domestic concession which had been wrung from him and which was now gnawing him with discontent, with useless regret, referred to the contemplated marriage between his beloved daughter Sophie Narischkin and Count Schuvalow. When Count Schuvalow presented himself unexpectedly be it said, and rather too suddenly, as a suitor, Marie Antonova insisted upon accepting him with the fervor, the lack of reason that characterized her acts. It was impossible to discuss the matter with her calmly. It was impossible to consider it from different angles. When she

wanted a thing, reason had nothing to do with it. She not only insisted upon acceptance, but it must be at once.

There was nothing in particular to urge against Count Schuvalow, although he himself would never have selected him. He was sufficiently rich, in the late twenties, possessed of considerable distinction, and the usual requisites of his class. But like most of the young men of his set he was a good deal of a *viveur*. Indeed, the handsome, blond men of the Schuvalow family had for generations been imperial lovers of the women of the Romanoffs. It had become with them a sort of profession, handed down from generation to generation. Alexander would have preferred to avoid a repetition of this scandal in the case of his daughter. The chief cause of his hesitation, and the cause of his regret now, was because he did not think that Count Schuvalow had any affection for his daughter. How could he have? They had conversed, had seen each other seldom. They were barely acquainted. In that case the marriage was merely an object to an ambitious end with him, in which his daughter was being made use of. His own desire was that she should have not only a protector, but a man who loved her.

And the attitude of his daughter in the affair had puzzled him more than anything else. She did not take sides in the dispute. It was as if it did not concern her. If she showed a temporary interest, it was to take the side that pleased him, as if, with her, her devotion to her father were the only question.

Count Schuvalow was kind-hearted. He need have no fear on that score. And yet he would not have selected him.

If his daughter were married, in a home of her own, protected by the great fortune which he intended to settle upon her, her present anomalous social position, in the house of a man who was not her father, but who still had legal authority over her according to the law of Russia, would be at an end. And in case he, Alexander, should die suddenly, it would be better. This was a point in its favor.

But Sophie Narischkin was not well. It was more than probable that she had consumption. This was a fact he did not permit himself to think of except under pressure. It was the horror that

stalked in the background of his mind. If this were true, what he had permitted was both hasty and brutal. She was frail. She was delicate. He could not look upon it any other way than as an unkindness to drag her away from her childhood's home, from the watchful care of himself. And what was the excuse for doing it? A man who did not love her and whom she barely knew, not to mention feeling affection for; a weak yielding, therefore, to one of the tantrums of Marie Antonova. Might he not be condemning her to a life of loneliness, of illness? She was young yet — too young. There was no hurry. She was just a schoolgirl. He could not think of her as grown. Why had he not merely deferred the matter to some undated future, when, if it possessed sparks of genuineness, it would have resurrected itself? Had he not weakly been forced into this against his will, against his judgment, by the tears of Marie Antonova, who might any day, like the unaccountable child she was, insist upon having the moon? He had yielded in the face of all his reasoning powers which were against it. He had done wrong, and he knew it.

These arguments and discussions had taken place some months before. But the party celebrating the engagement had been only the week before. Since that day he had not seen his daughter, although an equerry had carried daily a message to her.

The papers of Petersburg had been loud in their praise of the expensive, the lavish trousseau, which had been made in France, and the jewels and noble gifts presented by himself. They were on display now, he knew, in one of the upper rooms in the Narischkin Palace.

He could not recall how she had looked that night without a certain gripping of the heart. She was thin and frail to unreality. He did not know she was so thin until he saw her in white, undraped satin, which increased her height, her thinness. The sight shocked him. Her cheeks were too red, a desperate, pernicious red that was not of health. The great mass of her blond hair, piled high on the top of her childish head, seemed to crackle with a dry and angry light, as if infused with some unnatural heat. In the long ropes of yellow pearls which he twined about her neck for a gift, she did not take an interest. She did not look

at them. Her only word of thanks was to whisper in his ear: "*Remember* — you have promised to let me name the wedding day!"

His assent had given her visible pleasure. It was the only thing she seemed to care about. She showed neither interest nor dislike for her intended bridegroom. She was calm and apparently happy. This seemed to Marie Antonova to be as it should be. She was glad of it.

But to Alexander, whose senses were finer and more discriminating, there was something wrong which he could not get at. It baffled him. He knew, sensitively, that it was only an appearance of right. He recalled, too, how the dark, expressive eyes of young Baratinsky had followed her that night, with mingled longing, regret, adoration. He had fresh consciousness of being hurried into error.

She danced but once, he remembered, that night, and with Count Schuvalow, because dancing made her cough. He could never forget his unbidden, mental impressions as he watched her; a figure, eloquent, pathetic, arresting, and so perishingly lovely. Suddenly there had swept over him a sort of infinite regret that Marie Antonova could not feel as he did, could not appreciate her. In the light of his great love for his daughter he saw for an instant the limitations of the mother. When she sat down to rest after that one dance, young Baratinsky came and looked at her with eyes that haunted him still. And there was about her that night such a peculiar, pitiful combination of the child and the woman. It was as if she were both at once, and yet never wholly either. Baratinsky had felt this at the moment just as he had. Baratinsky was sad, too. He knew he loved her.

He could endure the torture of thought, of regret, no longer. He put aside the rest of his unread papers, carefully marking the exact place where he had left off. He rang. He ordered his carriage. He made up his mind to go to see her at once.

To his inquiry upon entering, a servant told him that Mademoiselle Narischkin was in her apartments. He made his way hastily up the yellow marble stairs, and directed his steps to her door. As he folded her tenderly in his arms to kiss her, he felt

dimly that she clung to him with a new resistance, a new comprehension.

The similarity of the two heads so close together now was striking. In both were the same fine lines, like the handing down by heredity of an antique ideal. Both were blond, elegant, and aristocratic. It was indeed as if Sophie Narischkin were the visible image of his own poetic dreams in his vanished boyhood. His visions stood incarnate before him. It was as if he were looking upon his regenerated self made young again. From Marie Antonova she seemed to have inherited neither physical nor mental traits. And a more far-reaching, generous, a finer mind looked out of her eyes. Strangest and most inexplainable of all, in a certain grand nobility of heart, she might have been the spiritual child of his own wife. By some unregistered subtlety of the law of selection she had rejected the blood of her mother.

"Are you happy, Sophie, my darling?" — holding her at arms' length and looking down into her eyes searchingly.

"Why should I not be? Have I not pleased you?"

"No, darling — not *me*. This concerns you wholly."

"Well, what difference does it make?"

"*What difference* — ! You can ask? Why — your whole future —"

She laughingly shook her head and looked up at him with loving eyes.

"Why does it not? Tell me!"

Again she shook her head and would not explain. They seated themselves facing each other, on a *canapé* in the pale-green room whose walls were painted to simulate the first flush of spring upon the woodlands.

Alexander was still uneasy and conscience-stricken. Her laughing replies had not satisfied him. He was searching in his mind for some surer way of getting at the facts.

"Now that you have had a week of intimacy with Count Schuvalow — and have learned to know him better — what do you think of him? It is not too late yet, you know. Does he please you? Do you think he will make you happy? Tell me exactly how you feel. You alone are to be considered."

"He is pleasant enough. But I hardly see him. He looks in for a moment — asks for my health — kisses my hand — and then goes to see mother." She said this happily, indifferently, interested evidently only in the presence of the one beside her. Then to allay further worry, she added: "He is polite, courteous, always. Do not worry, dear love! Everything is as it should be. Yesterday he sent me this — this miniature of himself" — picking up a tiny picture from the table at the head of the *canapé*.

Alexander looked for a moment at the fresh face of youth it framed. He felt the painter had made the blue of the eyes too seductive, and the mouth too lasciviously red. He handed it back without comment. It displeased him.

"What does your mother say, dear, the more she sees of him?"

She hesitated slightly before replying, as if to choose her words with care.

"I almost never see her."

"How can that be? Is she not here as usual?"

A slightly longer hesitation followed this. She evidently was confused. She did not know what to say.

"Since the engagement was announced — she — has told me never to come to her room without first sending a *valet de pied* to tell her I am coming." Her voice sounded strange in her ears. She wished now she had kept on saying she did not know.

"What can that be for?" the sweet, deep voice questioned calmly.

"I do not know."

"That is a strange thing to do. It seems to me wholly without cause."

"That is what I felt, too. So I thought I would ask you — to see if you agreed with me."

Her voice was just as he remembered it as a little girl when he answered some childish query. Alexander looked thoughtful.

His daughter continued hurriedly as if she wished to get the subject off her mind:

"One day I forgot. I went into her room without being announced. She was very angry — *very*. She acted just as she did when we were discussing the engagement. That" — looking up

at him sympathetically — "is why I am glad that the engagement is settled — is over with — the scenes made you unhappy. I could not bear to have them last — *any longer*."

"That is just what worries me so, darling. You assented for me. I felt it all the time. That is what makes me feel I have done wrong."

"But did you not say that I can name the wedding day?" she questioned, so merrily, with such a change of manner, and such a brave light in her eyes, that he was reassured. "*Ah* — you will see how that makes it right!"

Again he was puzzled and his face showed it. She laughed. The laughter made her cough. She put her handkerchief to her lips. When she took it away, she concealed deftly from his inquiring eyes the little drops of blood that spotted it.

"This morning I heard two maids talking when they thought I was asleep. What do you suppose they said? Perhaps I ought not to tell you."

"I am sure I cannot guess what they said, dear."

"It seems too foolish to repeat. Perhaps I ought not to —"

"Tell me!"

"I do not even know why I should remember it."

"Well — what did they say, dear?"

"They said — that when Count Schuvalow visits mama, she always locks the door. Why do you suppose she does that? Then they laughed and whispered a long time with their heads so close together I could not catch what else they said."

A white mask slipped swiftly over the face of Alexander. The sensitive eyes of his daughter saw it in an instant. It pained her. She regretted her words, although she did not understand why they had affected him.

Quickly he put away the thought that caused it, and his lips wore their old flexible grace again. She changed the subject abruptly, wishing she could make the former words unsaid.

"I'd like to prevail upon mama to go to the country. Do you not think it is a strange caprice for her to insist upon remaining in Peter *in summer!* I think it would be better for me out of doors, do not you?"

"Decidedly — my dear! You shall go, too. I will see to it."

"She will oppose it! She is always so bored when we are down by the Gulf of Finland. You know how she hates the country — how cross she is there —"

The little French clock on the table by the miniature marked the early afternoon. A change was discernible in Sophie Narischkin. Her little hands were restless. The hue of carmine was creeping up across her cheeks. Fever was lighting its sparkling candles in her eyes and insinuating an added glitter among the tresses of her heavy hair.

"Let us take a look at the gift-room together, little one — just you and I! Then I will look in upon your mother for a moment — and go."

"Leave the gift-room until another day," she pleaded.

"Are you tired of seeing it?"

"How could I be?"

"Why?"

"I have not seen it at all."

"You have not seen it? Astonishing! Why have you not?"

"Is there not time enough, dear one?" she answered evasively, her young face for an instant wearing a mask that resembled his own.

"You have not seen the jewels — the gowns from Paris — all for you?"

She shook her head.

She was walking with him toward the door now. When he put his arms about her in farewell, he was surprised at the heat of her body. It was like embracing a flame.

When, a few minutes later, he mentioned to Marie Antonova that it was imperative they go to the country, and right away, she did not say anything, but he was conscious of her stubborn resistance.

"It is imperative, my love, because of Sophie's health. I should think you could see it yourself. You should consider her more than you do." He sensed within her then a hardness, at variance with her gentle, velvety exterior. He felt she was indifferent, just then, to everything but the wishes of her personal

self. Yet her voice was so low, and the little movements of her voluptuous body so caressing, that the unpleasant impressions were fleeting.

"One cannot leave at a moment's notice," she replied.

"One can do many things — if duty demands it." He knew that this reply displeased her.

"I cannot see how I can get away before another month."

"You cannot take a month out of a Russian summer, my dear, and have any summer left. You must go — as I said, immediately. Do not force me to issue an imperial *ukase*," he added lightly.

He was as putty in her hands, she knew, in everything, unless it concerned the health of his daughter. On that subject argument was useless. She said nothing more, but he could feel the weight of her increasing displeasure.

"Come," rising when he found she was not inclined to talk, "accompany me down the hall that I may have the comfort of your presence a little longer."

She obediently put down the Italian lace which she was tentatively draping upon a blush-rose robe of silk, and walked along beside him, a little sullenly.

"Be sure to order my apartment made ready for to-night," he remarked carelessly.

"I am going out to-night," was the somewhat nervous reply. "It will be very late when I return."

"Where, dear?"

"First, to Prince Viazemsky's reception. Later to a little supper at the Austrian Embassy — Count Fiquelmont's —"

"Well — that has been before — has it not? Can I not wait as usual for you?"

"No — *not to-night!* To-night it would be better to sleep at the Imperial Palace —"

"*Oh!* — I see you are going to punish me," he replied good-naturedly, "for insisting upon your going to the country — against your will."

She smiled a trifle enigmatically.

"These requests that I sleep at the Palace are coming rather frequently of late, are they not?"

"I do not know why you should be surprised," she added, with suspicious haste and a little anger. "Have I not had much to see to? The engagement of Sophie — the trousseau — new gowns for myself, for the occasion — and my usual social engagements, too. *What can you expect?*" Her voice was a little unsteady now, out of its customary key.

He noticed it sensitively, and turned to look at her.

"As you wish my love — *always*," the indulgent voice replied.

She did not say anything in return. He kissed her lightly and ran down the stairs and out to his waiting carriage.

CHAPTER V

THE DUEL

"WHAT 's your name?"

"Sari."

"Sari what?"

"I just told you, did n't I?"

"I mean your *other* name of course!"

"Other? There is n't any!"

"Just Sari?" questioned Alexis Sergiewitch indulgently, looking down upon the pretty gypsy.

"Is n't that enough?"

"If you say so, it has to be."

It was late at night, some time after the arrival in Kishenev of Alexis Sergiewitch. They had met between the crowded tables in the *Kabak* of *Samus* (the Wine-Shop of Little Samuel) which is situated in the Old Town which he had promised himself to explore the day of his arrival, a part of Kishenev which was both evil-looking and shabby.

"*My* — how elegant you are!" — patting softly with the flat palms of her two hands his fashionable white piqué coat, and pleated shirt-front of fine cambric. He wore, too, the superb long boots of soft leather, common with men of the upper class, which fitted as if they had been moulded upon his feet.

"You are from Peter, are n't you?"

He nodded amicably, still smiling, as one would at a pretty child.

"Are you a prince?"

"No; but I'd like to be one to you" — laughing until his long white teeth gleamed like ivory.

"Well, you can be, *if you want to* —"

He looked down upon her caressingly, but he did not hasten to reply. Through open doors and windows came the warm, sweet scents of summer, the pale night of polar summer, slipping

down toward the sea of the South. The sky outside was gray-white. One could see at a distance. The *Kabak* was crowded with the variegated human conglomeration that borderlands usually show, where life is rough and noisy. There were Moldavians, Russians both of the North and the South, Bulgarians, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Turks, gypsies, and an occasional fat-bellied, phlegmatic German colonist, with a sprinkling of Italians. It looked like a scene from a comic opera. Some were eating *mamaliga* with butter, and the highly spiced and peppered dishes of the locality. Food had never been more plentiful in Russia than now. The masses were seldom better fed, because foodstuffs were so easily procured. Beef and mutton, any cut, cost one kopec a pound. Dried and candied fruits of all kinds were five kopecs a pound. French and Italian wines were five kopecs the bottle. A turkey, a fowl, or a duck cost little more. Vegetables were even cheaper than meat, fowl, or fruit, while milk and cheese seemed almost to have lost a money value. And when holidays or fête-days came, the fattest turkey could be bought for a ruble; or else a small sucking pig.

Those who were not eating were gambling with cards or dominoes. Others were playing chess; all were drinking, talking, laughing. Women mingled with the men freely. The greatest license in both action and speech prevailed. Moldavian youths in white-belted caftans were carrying about drinks on bright, painted, wooden trays. Young Russian men in bouffant trousers and tall boots, and who wore beards, helped with the food when the rush was greatest, while the owners kept the accounts by means of a Tartar reckoning-board. The dry *click, click* of the little balls, that slipped from side to side, punctuated the noise.

"What 's *your* name?"

"Alexis, little one, pretty one" — caressingly playing with the words.

Her face was grave for a moment. "That is unlucky! Can't you change it?"

"No, dear. Only women can do that" — laughing again.

She did not understand, and she did not laugh in return.

"You see I don't ask about *your* other name."

"Well, you can if you want to, little one."

"My, how slim you are — and — *and* young," she added a little wistfully. "I don't believe you are strong—like our men!"

In an instant his arm circled her. He held her in a vise. She lifted her face toward him childishly. But some butterfly caprice of perversity touched him and he did not kiss her, but instead merely swept her face gayly with his light, perfumed curls as he released her and set her down.

"I am not younger than you — am I?"

She looked at him sidewise, and he wondered at the pale, green, ungypsy eyes in this dark face. Some wild, uncatalogued mixing of races was there.

"How old are you?"

She shook her head. "How do I know? I am young till I have wrinkles. Then I'm old — What difference does the *count* make?"

"Not any, little one, to *me*. If I like you —"

"Well, do you not?"

"I like you all — *a little* — if you are pretty —"

"*Come* — with me!" She seized his hand and drew him eagerly toward the door, along the narrow space between the tables. He followed unwillingly. At the door he paused despite her efforts.

Outside the door, on either side, and resting against the wall of the *Kabak*, were rows of green-painted scythes, made in the United States of America. They belonged to the workers eating within, who lived in the little summer camp-villages near by.

"Where are you taking me?"

She smiled at him without answering.

"Do you wish to steal me?"

"Home, with me —"

"What for?"

"*I like you.* Don't you know it?"

"Where do you live?"

"Nowhere — that is, everywhere. Wherever the wagon is!"

"Where is the wagon to-night?"

"Down there! Across the Bug — in the field — beyond Jacob Eisenstein's *meierhof* —"

"That's too far, little one. *Too far!*"

"Come!"

"Not to-night."

"Why? Don't you like me?"

"*Oh, yes!* Who could help it?" — noticing that the eyes looked bluer now that emotion touched them, and that her dark cheeks were underflushed richly with red. Her nose was short, straight, and her little teeth sharp, and slightly pointed like an animal's.

"Then what is wrong with *to-night?*" — leaning toward him as if in anticipation of a caress.

"Too far — I told you. *Too far!*"

To her this petted dandy of the great world was like some exquisite human toy, which she could not understand nor classify, but which she longed for. She had never seen anything to compare with him, his dash, his elegance, his air of conquest.

Again tantalizingly he evaded the offered caress, and he felt her dumb longing surge up against him.

He looked back at the gayly variegated picture within the *Kabak*. It was a brilliant, changing, human canvas that pleased his eyes. It was new, strange, interesting, gayly colored, dramatic. He was flattered, too, by the servile, admiring glances his fashionably dressed, slender body evoked. The form of him dominated the assembly. And that was what he had an inclination to do always wherever he went, to dominate. In addition, these first weeks in Kishenev had been spent by him in a wild revel of recklessness, when he first set out to break the fast, in regard to both women and wine, imposed upon him by the long journey south and the Livonian guard whom he knew could not be trifled with. He was tired to-night. He had dissipated to the limit.

Weekly accounts of his insubordination, his rebelliousness, had been regularly sent to Petersburg by Count Woronzow. He refused to appear, on time, with the other young men, in the Counting-House, in the morning. Here his daily task was laid out. This not only injured the spirit of discipline, but the respectful esteem in which work should be held.

He shrugged his shoulders indifferently when reprimanded, at the idea that a gentleman, a scholar like himself, should be

asked to work. Work was for people of a different mental and social status. He would hold the position, *nominally*, if they insisted and he had to. But let some one else do the work! He would not do it, and he let them know it.

He had spent most of his nights in the narrow, crooked hill-street that led to the Old Town, which had fascinated him so. Here were houses of pleasure, open night long, and kept by women of all nations. He had found a different, a more interesting world of people than in Petersburg, and he was exploring it thoroughly. It had the color, all the license, and some of the glamour of the Orient.

Within the *Kabak* now he could hear the dull *click, click* of the Tartar reckoning-board alluring his sleep-heavy eyes like a lullaby. At the right end of the long bar where drinks were poured, in a corner a little dim and sheltered, he caught sight of an empty table which looked attractive. "Let's go inside, little one! There is a table, empty. See it? We will drink and watch the crowd awhile together." She followed him, but reluctantly, because she wanted him alone to herself. He felt a sudden longing to look upon the scene through lazy, sleep-dulled eyes; his arm, perhaps, about the wiry little body of Sari; and to listen, without the trouble of replying, to her prattle. "Which will you have, Sari?" he asked in a lazy, indifferent voice, "the red wine of Erivan, or the white wine of Kisliar?"

She was awed a little by this *grand seigneur* manner to which she was unused and did not speak. She reckoned, however, quickly that the price of this wine, if she could only have it, would buy her a new yellow-and-white silk head-kerchief. Whether she spoke or not evidently did not matter. He told the boy to bring plenty of both. He took a long, slender cigarette and fitted it into a receptacle of chased gold, first offering one to her. Then he watched the thin blue smoke-circles twine and twine about the small dark head of Sari, which was gracefully poised and round, watched it with a certain conscious voluptuousness, like one who loves pictures better than life.

"You are not — *real* Russian, are you?" — looking at him curiously, and burning with eagerness to know more about him.

"What am I, if I am not?"

"I don't know. That's why I asked. *Some* Russians have gold hair. Yours is just as light, but it is n't gold at all" — observing critically the pale curls, so thick, so deep. It was as if their gold had been muted by the black, forward-stretching shadows of some long ago, some ancient, imperishable dusk, that still persisted in enveloping him. She felt this as she sipped her wine and looked up timidly, from time to time, at the exquisite, arresting pallor of the youthful face beside her, which passion was etching so rapidly. He was drinking red wine thirstily, eagerly, and seemed to have forgotten her. She had not met anything so peculiar as this disdain. She did not know what it meant.

"Why did you speak to me?" He did not hear. "Don't you want to have a good time with me?"

"Talk if you feel like it."

"Are n't you going to say anything to me?"

"*Perhaps.* It may be I wanted to know your name. Or I wanted to hear your voice — *I don't know* — What difference does it make?" He was not looking at her. "Ah, yes!" he went on in a weary voice, thinking he had been rude. "I have heard you play other nights here. Sometimes — right in the middle of the music — you stop — break it off and your hand falls on the *balalaika*. Perhaps I wanted to ask you why you do it? I think that's it!"

"*Oh, that!* — It's because I remember —"

"Remember what?"

"*Yancksi.*"

"Who is Yancksi?"

"My lover —"

"Did you love him?"

"He went away."

"Where?"

"To Hungary — perhaps to play the fiddle to fat Germans — *somewhere* — when they eat and listen — or dance and make love — But he despises them all — *the white men* —"

"I do not care! What's that got to do with it?"

"He did n't say good-bye. He just went —"

"Did you care?"

"I don't know what you mean by *care*. I just remember him when I play pieces he used to play — then —"

"Who *is* Yancksi?"

"*Yancksi?* Oh! *Everybody* knows him. He's the handsomest gypsy from here to the Black Sea. And the best fiddler, too. He'll bring back gold from Hungary. You just ask any one. *You'll* hear!"

Then Alexis Sergiewitch recalled a certain petted beauty in a great pale palace in Petersburg, whom he, too, had left without saying good-bye. Aloud he remarked:

"They are alike just under the skin, great lady or little gypsy. Woman is woman; made after the same pattern" — and in his opinion not in the image of God. Then he leaned back, half closed his eyes, put his arm about Sari carelessly, and prepared to observe the tables in a pleasant, warmly luxurious mood.

Diagonally across from where they sat, a young Jewess, in a high gold-embroidered turban, was playing chess for money with a Greek who wore full bright-blue Turkish trousers, a short red jacket, and a little blue round cap, set high on his head. He was evidently one of the service men guarding the border. The face of the Jewess was pale and eloquent. It showed the distinguished lines of a highly specialized race. Only the face was marred a little, he thought, by greed, by shrewdness.

An Armenian woman, in loose green robe, a *khalat*, from whose head depended a swinging black veil, was going from table to table whispering something. *Ah, yes!* he had seen her before, in the crooked hill-street that led to the Old Town, which was the *Kasbah* of Kishenev. She kept a pleasure house there. He remembered a young girl he had met there once, in whose eyes there was the starry splendor of the nights of the East. The woman herself was no longer young. He turned his eyes away. Four handsome Italian men were gambling and quarreling. He liked the gleam across their faces of the red wine when they lifted their glasses. A Wallachian woman, who was handsome, and whom he had seen dance the *czarda*, was sitting sleepily against the wall. She was perfectly motionless. The round gold placques

on her head and breast did not tremble. He watched her eloquent black lashes against her cheeks.

A Turkish woman, wearing a short, red-velvet, gold-braided *bolero*, whose face suggested warm ivory and black velvet, and a glance of whose smooth black eyes was like an unearned caress, was evidently trying to get some important information out of a half-drunken, long-bearded Great Russian, who still preserved his native subtlety despite the wine. Perhaps she was a spy. A Turkish war was threatening. He noticed that her body had the suppleness, the grace, that mark the Asiatic. He liked her. She possessed that peculiar energy in languor that belongs to the East. Everywhere his sleep-dazed eyes turned he saw dully, but with a distinct pulse of pleasure, arresting lines, striking groups, clash of colors, love-affairs concealed or in embryo, so to speak, the marked intermingling of the manners of Europe with savage Muscovy and the Orient. Upon life here, despite the continued efforts of Count Woronzow, there was no restraint, and the busiest, gayest hours, when the sham coverings of morality were thrown off, were those of night. A dark woman, whose race he could not even guess, was sheathing a sword. He had seen her use it in a dance earlier in the night, when she stood naked to the waist, the sword poised upon her head. She was making her way toward the door now, wrapping about her brow, as she walked along, a bright-green gauze, that gleamed like a wet, shining emerald. The balls of the Tartar reckoning-board clicked seldom. The crowd was leaving. The young waiters were snatching naps along the wall. Sari was asleep, too.

"Did you mistake me for a pillow, little one?" he laughed, shaking her somewhat roughly. She looked uncomprehendingly for an instant into the pale, distinguished face that resembled a vision that was beside her. He shook her again, still laughing and indifferent. "Come. *Wake up!* It is time to go."

Wearily she bent to pick up her *balalaika* of *kissel* wood, dotted with little white diamonds of inset bone. She tried to put the strap over her head. Then she paused a moment to look at him, realize just where she was, and put up one hand again to touch softly the fine material of his clothes, which attracted her so.

"Good-bye, *little one!* I'll see you again sometime, *perhaps*" — touching her shoulder and bending his face for an instant tantalizingly near her own, as if he were going to kiss her, then straightening up swiftly.

She was dazed, and slightly displeased, as if some swift swallow's wing had grazed her eyes.

"Good-bye — *Prince — Alexis!*" She was just a little dark figure now, moving unsteadily toward a square of veiled pallor which was the door.

On the threshold she paused a moment, as if hesitating to breast the freshness and light outside, and because she hated so to leave him. She turned to look at him again, to make sure that he was real. "The wagon — Alexis — *goes* in a few days — " If he heard what she said, he did not trouble to answer. He paid no heed to her going.

The guests of night in the *Kabak* were being replaced by guests of the early morning. The server of drinks, the keeper of accounts, were gone and new ones had taken their places. A tall, dark, gaunt Mongol-faced Calmuck was cleaning up the long brown counter, and washing the glasses noisily in dirty water. A sleepy-eyed, tousle-headed Russian boy, roughly awakened, was sweeping awkwardly between the tables. The balls on the Tartar reckoning-board had been slipped back to place, to make ready for new accounts. Fresh, sweet air, from open doors and windows, was beginning to pulse, like a tide, under the heavily suspended tobacco smoke and the vapors of wine. Alexis Sergiewitch decided that he would order his breakfast, one of the hot peppered dishes they made so well here, which he liked, and some tea. But before he had time to give the order there was noise, disturbance, at the door. At the same time the reapers were boisterously sorting out their scythes. A number of young men were entering, newcomers, Russians, and mostly from the North like himself. Among them were some of his office companions in Woronzow's Counting-House, and Lvovitch Stolischnikow, a wealthy merchant's son from Riga, to whom most of his own neglected duties had fallen. They had been having a gay night like himself, but farther up the hill, in the Old Town. They had stopped into the

Kabak of *Samus* for breakfast, before going on to their work in the new city, which was lower down. "*There he is* — the white-figured dandy — from Peter — who is too proud to work," called out Stolischnikow scornfully at sight of Alexis Sergiewitch, remembering wrathfully, upon the moment, the added duties that had fallen to him.

Alexis Sergiewitch looked him steadily in the eye without replying.

They sprawled noisily over chairs at one of the larger tables, and called for a waiter.

"Keep still, Stolischnikow," whispered one of the others.

"You are drunk! He is n't so pale, nor so weak as he looks."

"Do you suppose I 'm afraid of that society butterfly? *That* —"

"*Sh-h!* — *Sh* — *sh!*" came the warning from another.

"He 's a dressed-up whipper-snapper." Then one bent merrily and whispered something in Stolischnikow's ear, which made him laugh immoderately, and glance from moment to moment toward young Pushkin, who sat stern and white, alone at his table, pretending not to know the others were there.

Stolischnikow proceeded to pass the whispered story around the animated, eager, youthful group at his table. Each gave way to an uncontrolled guffaw as he heard it, and his eyes gleamed across toward Pushkin. The early morning crowd gave promise of being more noisily unrestrained than the night crowd which had left. The night crowd was usually given to love and wine, cards and dancing, while the first morning hours caught the worn-out brawlers on the wing, making change of place, either weary or disgruntled.

"He 's what I call a *filcher!*" asserted Stolischnikow, louder.

"What 's that?"

"It is a kind of stealing you can't punish."

Pushkin paled visibly. The group of newcomers were too interested in this statement to notice it. Like all Russians they talked, talked, all the time, and were endlessly greedy for anything that promised surprise or novelty.

"Explain!"

"Well — *first* — he steals my time in the office. I do his work

— I get nothing for it. *Oh! no!* — He has not done six hours' work since he has been here. What *does* he do, you ask? He digs Greek coins on the banks of the Bug, cleans them — tries to catalogue them. He writes poetry — makes love — gets drunk — *idles* —"

The faces of the listeners looked sympathetic. "And *you* do his work? Well, you're an ass!"

"Back in Petersburg — he filched other men's wives — or *sweethearts* —"

This statement did not arouse particular interest in his hearers because it was so common. They knew stories enough of that kind.

"*They say*" — looking about carefully, as if not wishing this information to be general — "that even the —— *of the* —— he did not let alone" — whispering the name of a woman of society whom every Russian knew.

This was a more interesting morsel of gossip. They looked at each other with bright eyes in which unsuppressed interest shone. They would like to hear more about this. *This* was interesting.

"He filches poems from poets of other nations. He translates them, signs his name to them, and then *sells* them as his own — and takes the money."

Stolischnikow was growing madder and madder, as he waited hungrily for the breakfast unaccountably delayed. Wrongs rolled up within his mind like huge snowballs.

"That's what a *filcher* is. Now do you understand?"

This silence showed that they did understand. They were sympathetically impressed.

"What's he here for?" at length came the query.

"Don't you know?" scornfully.

"If I did, do you think I should ask?" replied another one, equally hungry and inclined to be irritable. "Why?"

"It can't be you don't know!"

"Well — why don't you say it and have it over with?" — impatiently.

"Because he's *a traitor* to Russia. He plotted *against the Emperor*."

"*That's a lie!*" thundered a voice so deep, so savage, it was not easy to believe it came from the thin, white-coated figure at the neighboring table. "*No man is more loyal to Alexander than I!* No man respects him more." Pushkin was on his feet.

"Don't anger him more, Stolischnikow!" whispered one of his friends.

"No, don't!" seconded another.

"There is no better swordsman in the land," warned a third.

Pushkin walked toward the table where the young fellows were sitting. The room suddenly became silent. Fear spread over it. The other early breakfasters began to look intently at the group. They forgot to eat.

"Take back what you said, or apologize," demanded Alexis Sergiewitch.

Stolischnikow was silent.

"Take it back, I say! No man is more loyal to Alexander than I. I will not permit any one to make a statement to the contrary."

The black, sullen eyes of Stolischnikow looked doggedly back into Pushkin's without replying.

"Will you take it back?"

"No!"

"Then take that, you coward — you traitor! *You* —" striking him across the face with his hand.

The young men jumped up, just as Stolischnikow made a dash across the table for Pushkin, which they had hoped to prevent.

"*Gentlemen*," came the stern voice of the day bartender, "fighting is not permitted. Settle your differences outside. But I would advise you to remember the prohibition which the new Governor of Bessarabia, His Excellency Count Michael Woronzow, has made against dueling."

They paid little attention to this wise recommendation.

"We will settle this outside, gentlemen, as he says," agreed Alexis Sergiewitch with dignity. "Where shall we go?"

"The *best* place," one of Stolischnikow's companions hastened to explain, "is the cherry orchard, just beyond Jacob Eisenstein's *meierhof*. We cannot be seen there, nor heard either. Choose your seconds, Monsieur Pushkin!" was the scornful advice.

"Oh, I do not need any! You take all you want. This is not of importance to me."

"I suppose you'd rather use swords, would n't you?" asked one of Stolischnikow's friends hesitatingly.

"It does not make the slightest difference!" was the rejoinder. "I'll fight with anything you say."

"Then I'll choose pistols for Stolischnikow."

"Suit yourself! It is all one to me!" Alexis Sergiewitch was almost good-natured.

As the crowd started toward the door, he began to chat unconstrainedly with the other young fellows.

Just outside the door they paused to examine pistols, match two and judge of their condition. This discussion was proceeding in an almost friendly manner when two wagons filled with fashionable youths drove up with a dashing curve upon the noisy white pebbles in front of the *Kabak*. In addition to the youths there was a good-sized basket of champagne in one of the wagons. The bottles were packed carefully in wet sawdust to keep the wine cool.

"What good fortune, boys! *A duel!*" Their words expressed the delight they felt.

"Where is it going to be? But first, gentlemen, drink with us. The best vintage of France, gentlemen!" — boastingly. "Then with your permission we will drive to the place you have chosen for the duel — to see that it goes according to rule. That is, gentlemen, if you have nothing to say against it," they added politely.

They uncorked the bottles. They drank lustily of the proffered champagne, except Alexis Sergiewitch. He kept proudly by himself and a little apart. But he observed with flattered pride the admiring glances from time to time turned toward himself. He knew they were asking each other: *Who is he? Who is he?* — and he liked it.

He had seldom felt happier, indeed, nor more fearless than on this enchanting morning of spring. When they reached the edge of the cherry orchard and climbed out of the carriages, he seldom stepped more daintily or nimbly across a polished floor in Peters-

burg to meet some fair dancer than he was moving now across the wet, lush grass of morning. Larks were singing jubilantly over his head. The free, shining steppe unrolled before his joyous, youthful eyes, like a pulsing ocean, ready to bear him to some promised land, as he walked along to keep, perhaps, his last tryst with death. Far across the Bug — he could see horses now and a wagon. *Ah!* — that, very likely, was the peregrinating home of Sari of the night, Sari of the narrow eyes the color of green ice. And now a little black dot was moving toward it, *slowly* — *slowly* — far out across the tumbling grasses. It looked like a little black flower, the round black head of Sari. And just at this moment, unreasonably and capriciously, Sari symbolized love, pleasure, and the seductive power of himself, largely because he had refused her, and had not followed to the night rendezvous. The wind upon his face was sweet from the winnowing darkness of night. He enjoyed it. He sniffed it with pleasure. Suddenly he paused in his walk with the others toward the place they had agreed upon for the duel. He looked up. Jacob Eisenstein's cherry-trees were red with fruit. Gems, precious and rare in color as a ruby, dotted the green, and laughed in splendor above his head against the blue.

"*Go on!* Choose the place. Get ready. Whistle when you have done it and I will come" — reaching up to pull down nearer a bough of shining fruit. He ate as fast as he could, and then began to fill his pockets, like a child who expects to be scolded and taken away. When both pockets were filled, he plucked all that he could carry in his hands. Just then the whistle sounded. He turned regretfully to follow it.

"Here is your pistol, Monsieur," one of the young men of the champagne wagon declared, holding out the weapon to him. "And *here* is your place. It is measured off. Stand here!"

Alexis Sergiewitch did exactly as he was told, without looking up, or seeming to pay attention, because he was busy with a pleasanter occupation. His anger, his excitement of a little while ago, had disappeared. He was enjoying himself thoroughly, to the amazement of the onlookers who had stumbled by accident upon the amusement so popular with young men of Russia.

"When my friend here counts four, you are to fire. Do you hear?"

Alexis Sergiewitch acted as if he did not hear. He went on eating the cherries which he held in his free hand, his body turned slightly away from his opponent, at whom he had not so much as glanced.

"*Monsieur Pushkin*, the time to begin has come."

"Very good. Go ahead."

"But it takes two to fight a duel, does it not?"

"*Of course!* Here I am. Fire whenever you feel like it."

"Kindly turn in the correct position, toward your opponent, *Monsieur Pushkin*. Place!"

He obeyed, holding the pistol limply in his free hand, while he crowded the fruit into his mouth with the other.

"One — two — three — *four*." One shot rang crisply on the clean air. It whizzed over the pale curls of Alexis Sergiewitch, who did not trouble to look up. No one spoke. They watched in amazement the aristocratic, white-coated figure, eating so happily and greedily.

"Are you satisfied, gentlemen?" he questioned, without looking at them.

"Why did you not fire?"

"Well," was the merry answer, "I had to pay him some way, did I not, for doing my work? I do not mind death — but — I do hate office work" — laughing with gayety and good-humor.

"I beg your pardon for the foolish things I said in the *Kabak*," declared Stolischnikow frankly, walking toward him and offering his hand. "I'm ashamed of myself. It was inexcusable."

"Don't mention it! Don't mention it!" was the quick reply, his vanity satisfied by the admiration he had received, and the gratification of his love of dominating.

CHAPTER VI

THE NIGHT VIGIL

After her father had embraced her and left her at the door of her room, Sophie Narischkin stood idly for a moment looking at the woodland scene painted on the wall near where she was, a reproduction of her favorite outdoor nook at their summer home by the Gulf of Finland, thinking that in a short time she would be there again. The silk door covering fell and she remained where she was for a few moments, looking lovingly at the paintings he had had made for her. In this position she overheard without intention the conversation between Marie Antonova and Alexander in the hall without, and the request that he should sleep at the Palace again that night. She rang for her maid then to dress her for the street, and sent word to her English governess that they would go out at once for the doctor's prescribed two hours daily in the open air.

During the drive she was distrait. She was preoccupied. She barely spoke a word to her companion. She was going over the old subject of worry which had annoyed her continually of late, and of which she could not stop thinking. She had been surrounded by carefully instructed, silent, highly paid servants from whom no information was to be obtained. And in the insincere social world there was no one to whom she could go. At the same time it was covert hints, exchanged glances, guarded innuendoes, half-heard whispers from these two worlds, the world of social inferiors and the world of her equals, which first raised the suspicion that there was something peculiar about her situation, that all was not as it should be. Why did the other young ladies of her acquaintance have only one father and mother, while she had two? And why was she not a Grand Duchess of the Romanoffs instead of just Sophie Narischkin, if, as she did not doubt, she was the daughter of Alexander?

As a little girl she remembered Dmitri Lvovitch Narischkin,

whose name she bore, to her childish eyes then an old man, and she gained the peculiar impression that in some way he was suffering, and she was sorry. She thought probably that that was what made his face twitch.

He was always courteous, always gentle. But he did not come near her. He did not pet her. He seemed not to see her. Soon she learned that he avoided her whenever he could. She could not recall that he ever voluntarily spoke to her.

There were long months when he was away somewhere, she did not know where, and she did not see him, and no one spoke of him. Marie Antonova treated him badly, she thought. She pitied him. She rebelled against it. She had an unwomanly sense of impersonal justice that would give to each his right. She remembered protesting once with her for this. Her mother had replied sharply that it was none of her business. And she had answered, questioningly: "Why is it not? Is *he* not my father?"

Then Marie Antonova had looked long at her with round, large, black, angry eyes, in which there was a puzzling glint of surprise. It was one of the few times she had seen the soft, deceptive, velvety surface of her mother changed. It had shocked her. She did not know that two persons so seemingly different could dwell in one body.

Later Dmitri Lvovitch seemed to be ashamed of her. This had caused her a very real, childish grief. This was worst of all. It had cut her to the quick, and all but made her ill. For a long time she had puzzled her head about it. After that, they used to quarrel violently, Marie Antonova and Dmitri Lvovitch, and her mother told her she would whip her severely if she ever told of it to any one. By *any one* she understood Alexander. These quarrels were at night, and they terrified her so that for days following she slept nervously like one in a nightmare. And then she was not well as a result.

Dmitri Lvovitch remained away for longer and longer periods after the quarrels, and when he did come home for a little while, he looked so old, so out of place and strange, sitting about lonely and unnoticed in the great, splendid rooms, that she felt sorrier for him than ever. But whenever she tried to show him her sym-

pathy, to get near him, she found it displeased him, she felt he wanted her to go away, where he could never look upon her again. This was painful. The older she grew the more he seemed to dislike her. He seemed to have a fresh grudge against her for growing up.

Long years came when Alexander was almost always with them, and she forgot about the past and was happy. He petted her enough for a dozen fathers. She used to think sometimes that Marie Antonova was jealous of her. He used to take her to the Imperial Residence, too. There the Empress Elizabeth petted her, and always called her "my little daughter." Yet the Empress did not come to see her. Why was that? Since she had been ill, she frequently sent an equerry, however, to inquire for her health, or to bring her a gift.

During these two years that she had been out in society, it was evident to her intelligent eyes, trained unconsciously from her lonely childhood to observe freely and impersonally, that women shunned her mother, despite her mother's happy, high-handed ruling of the court set, and that just at present they were shunning her more than ever. It was as if her mother had recently done something that forever put her out of reach of pardon. They were civil enough to her face, to be sure, especially if Alexander were present, but behind her back there were significant looks, exchanged glances, guarded and scornful smiles. And as for herself, the attitude of the social world toward her was one of mingled pity and admiration. It puzzled her. The pity hurt. Why should it be? It was intangible; she could not get at it. It was something that had to be borne.

She observed, too, that the various members of the Emperor's family, his mother, sisters, brothers, their wives, almost never addressed Marie Antonova, but they were unfailingly charming to her, Sophie. But her mother evidently did not miss their attentions, and she cared nothing at all for their opinions, because she was usually surrounded by an admiring coterie of men. This made her mother happy. This gave her all that she required, which meant adulation and social triumph.

There is perhaps nothing more difficult than to try to observe,

with just, appraising eyes, conditions which have surrounded one from birth. In the case of a person of middle class, acquaintances, sharp-eyed, critical schoolmates, envy, perhaps, occasionally perform this bitter service. But in the case of Sophie Narischkin, highly placed as she was, and protected by an Emperor, there could be no such possibility of sudden enlightenment nor contact.

The past two years, during which time she had frequented her mother's salons, her drawing-rooms, and associated with her mother's acquaintances, not too carefully chosen, she had heard many questionable conversations, and *risqués* stories, many scandalous accounts of *liaisons* in high places, when Alexander, be it understood, was not present. Her mother had not taken pains either to shield or enlighten her. And she had always found lying about in easy reach of her hands the erotic, immoral, French novels which alone amused the idle hours of her sensuous mother. This had given her an outlook, a knowledge of another kind, quite as unusual for a young girl of her years and station. Now a thought, perhaps better a fear, was rising slowly in her mind like the black, threatening upheaving in the western sky in summer of a vast and alarming storm. Like the storm it shadowed the happy pleasant living beneath it, and cast its shadows in all directions. Was her mother one of the celebrated bad women of her generation, such as she had read of in history, such as Isabella Orsini, for instance, to choose at random a noteworthy example? Could it be possible that she, too, was a courtesan, protected by royal favor? But Alexander loved her. He was noble. He could not love her surely if she were so unworthy. So how could that be? Or was it that she deceived him? *No, no,* on no account could that be! She could not be so base in the face of such love, such consideration, such lavish generosity. They lived, she reflected, in just such state as the royal family lived, thanks to him. She could not hold him up to ridicule, she could not be so ungrateful, uncaring. She dismissed the thought.

Her mind was so preoccupied that she did not even observe where they were driving, nor did she see young Baratinsky, handsome, dark, emotional, who passed them on horseback, and who

read easily the grief and worry upon her face. He cursed his luck again that something always separated him from her. Nor did she know when they turned toward home.

Yet she could not help linking fact with fact with precision, and contemplating the sum total of those facts, and realizing that that sum total was something considerable. And there were, of course, *other facts*, perhaps greater ones, that she did not know.

She had never, to be sure, seen much of her mother, who was usually either going to or coming from some entertainment. She was not a mother to waste time in a nursery. This fact she offered to herself hastily, gladly, in rebuttal of her suspicions. This was always the case except when they were in the country. Then Marie Antonova was ill-tempered, unsociable, and spent her days reading French novels, which depicted the only life she loved and could find satisfaction in, or in looking forward to the date of her return to the city she found so pleasant, where life could be made what she wanted it to be. So there had not been much companionship even there.

But what possible reason could there be now in forbidding her to enter unannounced the apartments of Marie Antonova? Was not this an astonishing prohibition? This had come since Count Schuvalow had begun paying court to herself. When she had told this to her father earlier in the day, she saw that it had shocked him. Then she had quickly regretted having mentioned it. He, too, thought something then. And the thought had not been pleasant.

When she had heard Marie Antonova tell Alexander that tonight she was going to a reception at the palace of Prince Viazemsky, the unbidden thought had come that it was a lie. She had felt many times lately that her mother's laughing accounts of goings and comings were false and that they concealed something else very different. Then she tried bravely to correct this thinking in herself, declaring it was wholly base, unwarranted; that it was merely the false fabric built up by her lack of health and consequent wrong seeing. It was undutiful. She would stop it. In this brave, repentant mood, insisting that all was right because she wished it to be, she returned to the Narischkin Palace.

On her way to her rooms she passed a servant in the hall below. She noticed that he wore the Schuvalow livery. A few moments after the curtain of her own door had shielded her from sight, she saw Marie Antonova run hastily down the yellow marble stairs to talk to this messenger in person, instead of sending word by her maid or a lackey, which would have been the usual thing to do. Evidently she wished no one to hear what she said and she did not dare risk it in writing. Concealment could be the only impulse back of this. She waited for a few minutes without taking off her hat, thinking the message from Count Schuvalow must surely concern herself, and that soon her mother would come across the hall to her room to give it to her. But she did not come. She waited awhile longer. Then she rang for her maid and began to dress for dinner, puzzled and worried anew throughout the dressing as to what could be back of this.

At eight she dined alone with Marie Antonova, who was in excellent spirits, her eyes shining with happiness and anticipation, but who carefully refrained from mention of Count Schuvalow, as did her daughter. This was suspicious, too, in her talkative, indiscreet mother.

For the first time Sophie Narischkin saw her mother's beauty with a new, a different comprehension. She saw her with an emphasis that was quite unusual and not pleasant. There was something about it that was shameless. It was too bold. It was almost vulgar. It lacked refinement. It lacked sensitiveness, delicacy. She felt that she was dressed only for show, to attract the greedy, lustful eyes of men. She did not look to her like a great lady to-night, not like the Empress, but like a courtesan. She recalled — quite involuntarily as she watched her across the table, her massed pile of silken black curls, where gems sparkled, her languorous eyes, her voluptuous shoulders and gestures, her dress cut too low — a story her governess had told her when she was just a little girl. She was provoked that the story was so *à propos* and that it should occur to her now. It was how once Marie Antoinette had sent a portrait of herself, most resplendently attired, to her mother, Marie Thérèse, and that astute ruler of a nation and penetrating judge of men had returned the

picture immediately with this reply: "*This is not a portrait of the Queen of France you send me. This is some cheap French actress.*" After she thought this over, she felt ashamed of herself, and sorry again that she had thought it.

When they arose from the table and went into the little blue drawing-room, Marie Antonova still wore her happy air, and she told her daughter glibly that she was going to look in upon several of her friends to-night, one of whom was Prince Viazemsky, who was receiving, because they were leaving the city so soon, and that she should not return until very late. She took it as a matter of course that her daughter was not to accompany her. She was evidently nervous. She was eager for the time to come to go. Her little satin-shod foot patted the floor restlessly at intervals, and hidden thoughts passed behind her eyes. At half-past ten she rang for her carriage. Her maid wrapped her in a cloak of gold lace and black sable, and accompanied her down to the carriage door, where she arranged carefully the long train of her gown.

Sophie Narischkin, left alone, idled for a while at the blue-and-gold painted spinet, trying to recall the words of a song of Baratinsky's. Vaguely in the song she felt his love touch her, and the beauty of his dark face flashed across her mind. Then she found that the motion of her arms in playing made her cough more than usual. She left the spinet and slowly climbed the yellow, lighted staircase, and turned idly into her mother's suite of rooms. The long windows here were open. She stepped out for a moment upon one of the little, round, iron balconies to breathe the freshness and to observe the pale, daylight night of summer above her head, which put out so persistently the dim polar stars. She let the curtains fall behind her.

She had stood here but a little time when two maids came in to straighten up Marie Antonova's room from the unavoidable disarray of dressing, and to fold back her bed-coverings for the night. Their voices came to her distinctly. They had the free, unrestrained notes that proved the absence of superiors. They were both scornful and merry. Their words betrayed the disrespect they felt for their mistress.

"Madam Narischkin told me not to wait up for her to-night." Here they both laughed.

"We all know what that means — *with her* — don't we?"

Tra-*lá!*
La-la-*lá* —

beginning to hum a *risqué* French love-song about a night rendezvous that probably paralleled in their minds those of Marie Antonova. Then they both laughed again, whispered together for a moment, finished putting the room to rights for the return of their mistress, and went out gayly and noisily.

Then she, Sophie Narischkin, was not alone suspicious of her mother? It was common talk, evidently, among the servants. And her own belief that she had told a lie to Alexander was not unfounded or wicked. Her vague feeling that something was wrong could be trusted. Her cheeks burned with shame. Her pride was wounded. A sort of sickening terror swept over her, in which the only clear thought was that it must be kept from Alexander, because it would hurt him so. And she, no matter what it cost her, must be one of the brave ones to help keep it. This made her, in a way, an accomplice *against* him whom she loved. Not only the physical beauty, but some of the noble nature of Alexander had been inherited by his daughter. She revolted at this baseness. From any angle the situation for her was painful — more, humiliating.

But he must be protected first. This she saw clearly through the confusion and shame that gripped her, realizing afresh how great was her love for him.

Upon the balcony late, with bare shoulders, bare arms, and without a wrap, she at length began to feel chilly. She turned and made her way slowly to her own room, where she asked the waiting maid to disrobe her and to bring a padded dressing-gown. Then she dismissed her for the night and sat down.

Here alone in the sweet, all-night twilight of sub-Arctic summer, she rapidly recalled the past, seeking anew interpretations of things that had puzzled her in the light of her recently acquired knowledge.

There was a night at the theater in the early spring which she remembered particularly. Lasky, the handsome Pole the women were so crazy over, who resembled nothing so much as a lithe, brown-black tiger, was playing. She and her mother occupied a box alone. Her mother was in gala attire. She was wearing a new, high, pointed tiara of red and white stones, which Alexander had had made for her. Whenever Lasky received any especial triumph upon the stage, glasses were lifted first at him, and then turned at once upon her mother. Sometimes it had seemed to her that the words the popular Pole uttered were addressed to her mother; that Lasky and her mother were the real actors whom the house were applauding. And in the eyes of Marie Antonova as she watched him, her daughter saw a light that transformed her and made her almost a stranger. She had been restless, too, just as she was to-night. And she had tapped her pretty feet impatiently. Then Alexander made his entrance. The audience arose. He came at once to their box, serene, handsome, noble to look upon. But she had felt upon the instant that, for some reason she could not at all explain, his presence displeased her mother. She felt that great waves of anger, great waves of rebellious disappointment, were sweeping over her, like an incoming sea which no one may check. She had been astonished at the time at the subtlety of her discernment. She had wondered how she knew. Then she remembered thinking it was because she played the part of an observer in life, a mere looker-on, so to speak. Her penetrating mind was not obscured by selfish or personal wishes.

Alexander came home in the carriage with them that night. She felt that this had displeased her mother more than anything else. After Alexander took a seat in their box, the Polish actor did not again look in their direction. He seemed to avoid them with his eyes. But the audience kept looking stealthily, as if to observe, for some reason, her mother anew. The audience evidently had some fresh interest in her. It had been a most unhappy evening for her. She had been glad when it was over. And now she hoped they would go away to the country without delay. If they did, she would secretly beg Alexander to prolong

their stay there, by some means or other. That would give her added time for peace, for self-adjustment.

She heard a slight noise in the outer hall. She picked up the miniature clock from the green table and held it up in front of the tiny blue flame which was flickering in front of the Virgin. It was twelve o'clock. Marie Antonova surely could not be returning so early. Social life in Petersburg had only just begun. She peered out carefully from the shelter of the silken curtain. There she was, however! Her cloak of gold lace was trailing heavily behind her, and exposing her bare, white shoulders, and the sparkle of gems, like a night of sullen stars, in her curly, thick hair. Her head was thrown back. There was delight in her eyes — a reckless, wild delight. The expression changed her so that it shook her daughter, like grief or fear. There she was! And bending over her now, as his hand was just reaching out for the doorknob to turn it softly, bending over her lovingly, so that from time to time he hid her face, was Count Schuvalow, young, blond, seductive. They opened the door stealthily. They went in.

She did not know how long she stood there after that. She could estimate the length of time only by the fact that her feet, her limbs, were cold, numb, and a heavy weariness enveloped her.

The air was icy now. It came through the pallid window squares in little, petulant breaths. She wished that she had closed some of the windows. She felt chilly again just as she had upon the balcony.

The door of her mother's room opened again, timidly this time. Count Schuvalow came out. She watched him walking carefully on tiptoe along the edge of the thick blue velvet floor covering to the top of the yellow marble stairs which the dying candles were lighting dimly. She saw him turn the collar of his coat up quickly, and then balance carefully for the space of an instant upon the top stair, before he stepped down.

She did not feel any added personal resentment in the fact that the lover she had just seen leave the room of Marie Antonova at this hour was her *fiancé*, or that this greatly increased the enormity of the sin. She knew that Alexander's promise that she could name the wedding day released her. She had no

delusion about the cough that racked her. She knew that when the gay leaves of autumn took their departure she would very likely go with them. *But Alexander!* What would the knowledge do to him? Alexander, whom the people of Petersburg were beginning to call the Prince of Peace when they looked out of their windows and saw him pass in the streets, what would it do to him! What would it do to him whom her childish heart worshiped as she worshiped her God? She felt that she was base for being glad that she, perhaps, with the autumn, would get out of it; the worry, the nerve strain, the humiliation, the shame, and leave him alone, alone without her love to protect him, to shelter him, alone to suffer on.

Perhaps Dmitri Lvovitch, in the years long passed, had loved her mother, too, and she had betrayed him. That was why he was old and sad now. That was why he was neglected and driven away. Perhaps that was what she always did, *betray — betray* — She was vile — base — and it could not help but reflect upon her. Was she not the daughter of this monster whom men mocked? Who was she? Was she not merely the accidental result of one of her mother's many nights of stolen love of long ago?

Shortly afterwards she heard servants beginning to be astir. She found then that the pillow was wet. Broad summer daylight had come. It was flooding the room with cold, clear light. It showed that she had had a slight hemorrhage of the lungs during the night. She rang for a maid and had the pillow changed. She cautioned her carefully against mentioning the fact to any one.

She asked the solicitous maid to close the window shutters to keep out the light and the early chill, and to tell her mother that she would not be down for breakfast because she was sleeping late, but that she would meet her at three o'clock as she had promised.

CHAPTER VII

PUSHKIN AND COUNT WORONZOW

The affair of the duel could not be kept from Count Woronzow for any length of time. When the news of it, together with all the astonishing, slightly ridiculous details, greatly enlarged and distorted, putting, naturally, the burden, the blame for law-breaking upon Alexis Sergiewitch, reached the old man's ears, it was three days later. Lvovitch Stolischnikow he shut up in the Guard-House without delay, ordering a diminished food ration and the highly sobering recommendation of solitude and meditation. Young Pushkin he could not find, or he would have punished him the same way. He issued a general order, however, for search. Alexis Sergiewitch had hidden, hoping the affair would blow over if he were not present to keep alive its interest, hidden in a little white house kept by a Turkish woman, halfway up the long hill, in the Old Town. Here he could listen to Oriental music, eat strange, highly spiced foods that tickled his palate pleasantly, smoke and idle, in short, enjoy himself considerably in his own way, if it had not been for the pressing need of clean clothes. And here they found him, despite his silence and the willing sacrifice of cleanliness.

Count Woronzow, in the meantime, had done a good deal of speculating about this perplexing specimen of the *genus humanum* who had been unceremoniously handed over to his protection and discipline.

Count Michael Woronzow was not so stupid as he looked. In addition he had had experience with men. Few knew them better. Few would be quicker to see or give credit for merit of any kind, unless it happened to be artistic merit. He had seen no little of the world. His powers of observation had not been limited to Russia or his own race. He had seen something of all races. He had been born upon a ship off the coast of Spain. The renowned cities of Europe had passed in turn in review before

his childish eyes. He had received his diplomatic education outside of Russia. He had been sent to school at a great English university. In manner and dress there was something about him still of an English country gentleman of the richer class. His wealth was colossal. Palaces which he seldom saw, in various parts of Russia and the Crimea, owned him as master. The combined estates of himself and his wife were reported to equal in extent the realm of France. Yet he lived soberly, with no outward show, giving himself almost no more comforts or luxuries than his men, and never in any way acting the superior.

He was small, dark, stubby, and of a bearing far removed from imposing. His noble birth was in no wise evident. His forehead was insignificant, his hair was unruly, and his eyes small, dark, nondescript, deep-set, and expressionless. But what was lacking in exterior finish and adornment had been richly added to his heart, his nature. They contained the beauty his body did not. At the risk of his life he had saved the lives of soldiers under fire. He had commanded in person in the dramatic siege against Erivan. He was a brilliant figure by virtue of his bravery in the battle by Borodino. Once in 1815 he generously paid off the debts of his officers that they might feel unencumbered; to the amount of two million rubles.

When Alexis Sergiewitch was found, he, too, was ordered to the Guard-House, with a like recommendation concerning solitude and meditation. A punishment exactly equal with that of Stolischnikow was meted out to him.

That day, as it happened, he had received a letter from his old nurse, Arína Rodiónovna, in which she wrote: "I have just had a mass said for your health. Live, my darling, a good life, and never do anything to be ashamed of." When he read this, the dramatic, unflinching hero of the duel in the cherry orchard, who could face death, wept like a child.

Count Woronzow meditated. His meditation had inharmonious heights and depths. It coasted occasionally near dazzling, and, for him, dangerous islands of speculation. He saw plainly that pleasure was the only life the boy could comprehend. This was cause more for pity than blame. Life is sweeter to poets, to

artists, he said to himself, in that brief fury which is their youth, than it is to other people. It seems to them then that the world is made for them alone. Count Woronzow was educated. He knew that the road of poets almost always lies along the dizzy edge of an abyss. He saw plainly in young Pushkin, too, that great, vibrant, unrestrainable power of life, such as is born under equatorial suns. But if he was gay-spirited and reckless, he knew at the same time that the boy was not cowardly. "And he is young!" he said to himself. "*Youth, and a poet!* A bad combination. In the unfortunate case of Alexis Sergiewitch, the only rule of conduct that he knows anything about is a fantastic honor, which even in our old-fashioned Russia is beginning to be *passé.*"

Here he smoked vigorously, as if trying to gather courage for the conclusion which he could not seem to avoid.

"A poet's idea of the conduct of life is usually old-fashioned, no matter how much of a modern he may be in his art. A poet, usually, *lives* — *emotionally* — at least a generation behind his age."

Before he ventured upon the next observation he smoked even more vigorously. Then he made hastily the sign of the cross, as if in horror of his unregeneracy. Who was he to pass judgment upon his fellows? Was he, too, not filled with original sin? Not for any consideration would he have uttered aloud such a revolutionary idea. Even the thinking soiled the whiteness of his upright soul.

"The best thing that can happen to a poet — *is to die young.* He cannot put up, decently, with what life gives later; old age, disillusion, and the loss of that marvelous joy which, as soon as the world sees it, marks him out for envy, for hatred and trouble. Old age has no place for him where he is not either useless — or ridiculous — in the world to-day. His butterfly nature must feed upon the flowers and be flattered by the sun of youth. Only life's loveliest gardens are suitable for him, its pleasances. To the poet, old age is fatal."

Here he puffed so furiously that his round, inconspicuous face, with its rows of horizontal brow-wrinkles, vanished in a cloud of

smoke; for what was he, he thought humbly again (by way of retribution this time), that he should pass judgment upon his brothers! He shook his head wearily with something that resembled despair. How confusing, how perplexing was life! Then he arose. He opened another window. This seemed to relieve him. The heat in Kishenev, in summer, was intense. Through the open window came a wind current from another direction, and the heat-tinged fragrance of a pale, tall poplar and two white birches which grew close by. The current of his meditation changed slightly as he reseated himself.

"He is different, *racially*, from the others" — recalling some of the wild adventures, the hairbreadth escapes, during the past weeks, of young Pushkin, whom Alexander, in a private letter, had commended to his protection. "I cannot therefore reasonably expect — *from him* — the same results."

Count Woronzow was interested in horticulture. He studied it. He experimented in plantings of various kinds. He had made independent scientific observations of his own. He was coming to believe in certain peculiar but interesting affiliations between men and plants. This had a bearing upon his present outlook. The same laws were applicable, largely, to both. Both were *life*, only in different stages of progression.

"He is of a different *race*," he said aloud, as if he had reached a new and more definite conclusion. "Not so long ago some of his progenitors were *savages — of the jungle.* He is not to be blamed because *he is as he is.*" Count Woronzow was fast finding stepping-stones across the place of difficulty. The opposite shore was heaving into sight. It was steadying him.

"He can comprehend no spiritual truth. He can see only the *sensuous* beauty of his surroundings. He feels only the superbness of surfaces. This is *reality* to him.

"In him, too, there is that tremendous, outbounding vitality that characterizes tropic growths, like the exuberant, expanding wonder of jungle plants, under equatorial suns, with which we of the North do not sympathize and which we cannot gauge. One should not be angry because the jungle flowers more profusely than the plain. That view would be unintelligent — *unscientific.*"

He concluded that beyond the quick judgment of our conceit, our shabby momentary wisdom, there is a greater judgment which unself-conscious facts unfold slowly.

"Besides — there are no places of amusement here — no legitimate ones, at least. There is only the wine-house. Young men must be amused! The wine-house is the social center — club, gambling-house, dance-hall, general place of meeting for exchange of ideas — the bank — the exchange — place of rest —" Again he shook his head wearily. There was much to be done by him, in the way of bringing about civilized living, loftier standards — in this South of Russia, which he was trying to remake, to bring up to the measure of the rest of Europe, and nearest of all to that dull, well-ordered England where he had spent much of his youth.

Another reason that he felt peculiarly responsible for the welfare of Alexis Sergiewitch was that he believed that the keeping together and in influence of the native aristocracy possessed elements of strength that meant the future saving, the security of the land. The aristocracy of a country must be kept intact. It was the backbone. It was the model. In his heart there was the respect that good men keep for the best of their race. This belief had been strengthened by his education in England, this feeling of fellowship, this feeling for caste. If it was not altogether just, it had been proved to be serviceable. He was convinced it was best in the long run.

The ancestors of Alexis Sergiewitch, on one side, had been the same as his own. He respected them, therefore. They had fought in the old dramatic, fanatical wars for the faith with Poland, against the Turk, where his fathers had fought. They had stormed off the slant-eyed Mongol. They had opposed the Swede. They had helped build the ancient cities of the Slav in the South just as his ancestors had done. They were part of the picturesque past. He came, in short, of a celebrated *boyar* race. For that reason Count Woronzow had a certain increased consideration for him, or rather felt greater his responsibility. He belonged to the caste whose duty it was to keep Russia intact, and free of foreign influence. In addition, a friend of the old

man's, in whom he had considerable confidence, had observed young Pushkin at night in the wine-houses, and in various places of pleasure in the Old Town. He had confided to Count Woronzow that he did not think Alexis Sergiewitch got any pleasure out of his wild nights of drinking and gambling, nor even from his relations with women. He longed for pleasure, but he could not grasp it. He searched for it continually, but it eluded him like a will-o'-the-wisp. What he gets oftenest is weariness, his friend had explained, and disappointment, which he is not old enough now to understand. He has some wild pagan ideal in his brain which he is not able to make real. He longs to duplicate the pleasures of Petronius, of Catullus, but he does not know how. The only thing that can bring him this intensity of pleasure he longs for is his art which he neglects. He longs to *live* poetry instead of writing it. The double vision confuses him. In short, Count Woronzow gained the impression from his friend's wise conversation that the pursuit of folly was an obsession with the young man. He was merely trying to find something unfindable that belonged to the spirit, and that symbolized to his mind what men mean by spring, youth, delight.

He concluded now, as a result, that he, Woronzow, had not done his duty. Or, better, perhaps, he had not understood what his duty was in its petty and peculiar ramifications. Any wrong, he acknowledged generously, means accountability in two places. He must give up some of the few hours of leisure that remained to him for the purpose of directing the amusements of the young men who were with him. It was his duty. He wondered that he had not seen this before. He must superintend not only their work, but their play. He must cut another slice out of his own hard-working, perplexed day. He would invite them to take dinner once a week with him. He would provide from his own pocket a dinner so good that they would be glad to come. Then they could talk together as friends, and in the talk he would scatter helpful and suggestive thoughts, just as he had scattered apple and fruit seeds the length and breadth of the uncultivated steppe, and wait, with the same absence of impatience or prejudice, for the good fruit to be borne.

He received his young guests at dinner a few nights later in the same distinguished attire, with the graceful, affable manner with which he would have received men of his rank in any of his sumptuous palaces. When dinner was announced, he arose and stepped in front of a small brass icon hanging on the wall, the same one he had carried with him faithfully through the Napoleonic wars. He made the sign of the cross, and said a brief prayer. The substance of the prayer was that he hoped the bread of the spirit would redound to the good of his youthful guests, like the bread upon his well-filled table to their bodies. As usual he was sincere, reverent, and commanded respect.

After the dinner was over, and they had returned to his plain little living-room, and he had explained his interest in having them as guests at his board in future once a week, and after they had chatted awhile, chiefly upon the injury the locusts were doing to the midsummer fruit crop about Kishenev and its grape-curled hills, the threatening rumors of an approaching war over the Greeks and the sacred faith, he asked the other young men to be good enough to excuse him. He explained that he had some matters of importance which he wished to discuss alone with Alexis Sergiewitch.

"My dear Alexis Sergiewitch," he began when they two were alone together, "because your fathers were friends and companions of my fathers, and our interests, our sentiments must have, therefore, in some sort, the same objective, because they had a similar origin, I have felt moved to remonstrate about this goal you seem to have set for yourself, namely, *Pleasure*. Pleasure as a goal, my boy, is like drinking only the foam upon your champagne and then throwing the rich liquor, which is beneath, to the dogs. Pleasure, of your kind, is possible only in youth. And youth is so brief — my boy — lasts such a little while — It is not worth living, *alone*, for. Long years come after it, Alexis Sergiewitch — sobering years — *to all* — when *pleasure* — as you interpret it — is not only unreachable — but ridiculous. *Long years* — which pleasure cannot help us to meet— to live through. But there is something that persists and is great, both in youth and age; and that is service — service to man — to

Russia — without hope — or wish for reward — *and duty.*" In the voice that was speaking there was no spirit of dictation, no command, no I-am-holier-than-thou tone, only a great kindness. Alexis Sergiewitch could feel it shining upon him warmly, like a generous, all-vivifying sun.

"You have refused to perform your duties in the office. No one, under me, can eat the bread of our blessed Emperor without giving return, according to his strength, his ability. I cannot permit, in honor, a *filching* from him." The word *filching* touched the ears of Alexis Sergiewitch unpleasantly.

"When you learn to substitute *duty* for *desire*, you yourself will be happier, too. You will have found something to live for. You will be richer."

This closing sentence sent defensive thoughts, not altogether flattering, flying like dust-clouds across the surface of his mind. He had the intelligence to grasp very distinctly the expanded meaning of the old man's words. He knew upon the instant that there was truth in them, and that he could put up only with things that were pleasant. He could not suffer. He was not brave enough, spiritually, to learn how. He could not put up, for an instant, with boredom. It was necessary for him, he knew, to keep himself wrapped about with joy. He must feel continually the titillation of happiness that was changing. He must keep himself continually in a mental world that both enchanted his senses and made him happy. He could not subsist upon the same kind of mental food as his fellow-workers in the office. The long, dull, dutiful, unmarked working days of ordinary humanity would be death to him. That was probably the difference, he thought upon the moment, between the mental atmosphere poets live in and that of people who are not poets. He saw, in a cruel, clarifying flash, that unconsciously he had been reversing the normal, healthful, conditions of living. He was becoming that most perilous thing, for which wise life makes no provision — *but sadness* — the rare, the exceptional.

"I have not so much myself to live for," the little old man was continuing, in a sort of chastened voice which caught his ear sharply and which hurt him, "not so much love — not so much

happiness — But perhaps I was not good enough to deserve it," he concluded soberly. "So I work for others. I work to bring God's good into the world. I put service in the place of self." The old man was becoming now a pitiful figure.

Varying emotions swept confusingly over Alexis Sergiewitch. They swayed him now this way, now that, as he listened to the old man's words. He viewed clearly as Count Woronzow spoke that other, that different world of work, of duty, for which he had no ability and not sufficient respect. But it was what made, what safeguarded mankind, he was forced to admit.

"The impersonal good that you get from helping others — with no wish for return — has something in it that satisfies, that armors the soul; you might call it the *manna of the spirit.* Self, my boy, is a little, shabby thing to live for. Self, however, is all that little minds can find. But we must pity, not blame, them who have eyes for nothing else. I thank God that He has given me the eyes — *to see something else.* With the power to see comes obligation, and then the joy of service.

"When I am stern with you, Alexis Sergiewitch, it is duty, not revenge. Duty, as I see it. I may not always be right. I pray to God for light. I have no help. I live in lonely outposts — for years at a time — the hard life of a soldier, a pioneer. The blood of me goes to make the desert bloom."

Pushkin was listening to a new poetry, the poetry that the heart of great men makes. In nobility of nature he recognized a poetry superior to that of words. He felt again that queer little jostle of mind he had felt first the night in Petersburg when he had listened to his inspired friend, Ryleiev, unfold his unselfish dream for the freedom of man. Evidently there were outposts in the unmapped Land of Poesie, which he, the fashionable, petted Pushkin, did not know and had not suspected.

"Whenever anything happens to wound me — to grieve me," the kind old voice which the years had tempered was continuing, "I perform some fresh service for my fellow-men."

The pause that followed swung in upon them with the power of a sea that is silent in its surging. Then the conversation changed as a tide changes that has reached its full, and in Count

Woronzow the entertaining courtier took the place of the ascetic, the reformer, and to a question of young Pushkin's he replied:

"Yes — I saw him once, *face to face* — your hero — *Napoleon* in the battle. It was on the smooth and level land, just this side of the Polish border, in the beginning of that fateful autumn, when he was first turning his face toward what he thought was glory — and Russia. As usual, he was commanding in person. I was in command myself that day of a detachment under Bagration. Bagration, you know, had ninety thousand men at one time on the Niemen. It was what you might call the flower of the Russian army. He was hot-headed. He wanted to give battle at once. But Barclay de Tolly refused. At the first light — *at dawn* — we were right opposite the enemy. Our play, as you know, was to withdraw — to withdraw — refuse to give battle, lure them on — into the heart of the country, where winter and cold would destroy colossally — as the arms of man could not. Barclay de Tolly kept making Bagration retreat. He had to do it, you see, to keep up with him. He was no mean tactician, and Bagration, who had been to school to Suwarow in the art of war, had a genius for protecting retreats. Before I knew what was happening, there I was, face to face with him! What do you suppose he looked like? A god — a pagan god; white, relentless, beautiful, and unmoved."

Count Woronzow was now rapidly making the sign of the cross. An expression that united ecstasy and fear was upon his face.

"That was what he really was, *not a man*, a pagan god — the spirit of evil — come out of the South into our pious, God-fearing Russia, to destroy the work of the Cross.

"I knew it then. I knew he was the spirit of evil, made incarnate. I spurred my horse. I started toward him. With God in my heart I would have destroyed him. I felt the strength. I felt the courage. A bugle-call rang out, clear, pure, shattering as the first sun ray. In between him and me swept the rhythmic feet of protecting Polish cavalry. First, the light hussars; then the heavy dragoons — those pitiful, eloquent, dramatic Poles, who

were of so little account in the humdrum of a long siege." He paused here for the full effect of his words to be felt by his youthful listener. Then in a changed voice, whose distributed emphasis could not be missed, he remarked: "The Polish cavalry, Alexis Sergiewitch, is to the army what the genius is to life; something splendidly effective, but only in rare moments. The commonplace, broadly considered, is far more important."

Back alone in his room that night, Alexis Sergiewitch did not like to contemplate the fact that the life he led was, as Count Woronzow had endeavored to point out, frequently ridiculous, and almost always exaggerated. He felt dimly, to be sure, and often enough, without any one's help the wrongness, the unreason of his acts. But he did not like to confront unpleasant facts. He did not like, either, to plan a way to avoid them. It suited him better to put away their disagreeable memory, with a gay and eloquent gesture, and to flee for comfort to that invisible world of creative power, which Count Woronzow was so disposed to belittle, where he, too, by means of what the world calls *folly*, could reign superbly.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ART EXHIBIT

Social and intellectual Petersburg was on its way to the Art Exhibit. It had opened, under the patronage of Alexander, in what was called the Engelhardt Salon, a semi-public place, where promenade concerts were given in winter, sometimes great balls, and where conventions had been called. It was good, the Emperor thought, to develop interest in impersonal things such as painting, music, the dance, and to divert the popular mind from politics and affairs governmental.

The painters exhibiting, it is hardly necessary to state, were not Russians. Petersburg was a city where there was little that was genuinely Russian, and where most things were imported, including the current speech, except food, the dance, and the earth upon which the buildings, copied from those of other nations, were built.

In this hastily, sketchily improvised civilization of the Far North, where necessarily there must be much lacking, in this mad, willful attempt to make life sumptuous and rich without the careful, complacent aid of time, there was nothing old, nothing venerable, save perhaps the pitiful human race and its endless continuance. There was nothing here hallowed by years and affection. There was nothing made interesting or important by past generations, by their love, by their efforts, or by their caprices. There was no native expression here in the North in architecture, either stone or wood, or in painting, of the reasoned, patiently evolved life of the people. There had been no eloquent, inspired, shadowing Middle Age in this country to temper richly the present, or to pile lavishly its ecstatic treasures about them. All was new, glaring, harsh, imitated, dull.

In the proud palaces of Petersburg, where moved people so richly dressed, there were no superb accumulations from the past, from ancestors, that belonged here by right of origin. They, the

present owners, were frequently superior to their surroundings, while princely families of the south of Europe to-day are occasionally inferior to theirs.

The rich Petersburgers lived gayly, uncaringly, amid the false splendors, filched and furnished backgrounds, of alien races. This, unconsciously absorbed through the eyes, the senses, had no little to do with their mental suppleness, their astonishing intellectual receptivity. And they who were on their way to the Art Exhibit, the members of Petersburg's polite world, and the members of its mentally alert world, the *intelligentsia* formed a mosaic, *an ethnological mosaic*, as richly varied and as geographically interesting as the background formed by their homes and their belongings.

Few of them — almost none of them, in fact — were of pure Russian blood. Among their ancestors had been Tartars, Greeks, Georgians, Lithuanians, Poles, Swedes, Germans, Wallachians, English, Scots, and so forth and so forth; a list too great to enumerate or to give in half its entirety. This had shed upon the conduct of their lives contradictory impulses, conflicting energies.

The people who had made the beautiful but to them foreign furniture amid which they lived their dissipated lives and played their parts, and who had formed the great society of the days before the *Terreur*, which they adored so and copied assiduously, had been a race of *one blood*. They had possessed the social harmony that comes of homogeneity. But now the powerful *oneness* of the past of them they copied was broken up, even in France, just as it had been already *racially* broken up in them here, the Russians. All that the world of Alexander's day could do was to look back upon it, the great past, just as we look back, perhaps, at some proud moment of Greece, with regret for a vanished ideal. This interesting ethnological world-map, which was Petersburg society in the eighteen-twenties, was not, perhaps, readily readable by all. It was only under the pressure of rare or intense moments that the hidden impulses of the racially varied people who lived here showed or became effective. In small but histrionically unimportant ways all individuals, in their petty discontents, hatreds, their personal preferences, give expression

again to the old primitive impulses of races. He who is nearest to the primitive past cannot be depended upon so greatly in the present. His blood is not sufficiently chastened. Not yet sincerely enough does he worship civilization, which has the power not only to subdue, but to kill. There is a lack of harmony within. The inner man is not at peace. He is still a hybrid. That is what Petersburg society was. And that is what its leader, Alexander, was too, an exquisite, political hybrid, not reducible to exact cataloguing anywhere.

The cosmopolitanism of Petersburg, its astonishing, complex, hothouse, human growths has never been equaled in the world, and it has been curiously neglected by the social historian. Cosmopolitanism, that brilliant, useless thing, that superb inefficiency, suggesting the glowing, golden surface of a seedless orange, was to be studied at its best here, with its shifting shadows, its disconcerting complexities. Cosmopolitanism means, usually, an end of desirable, *genuine* things, but almost never a beginning. It is the last fine flowering of a garden soon to be destroyed, which is permitted to bear no fruit.

The paintings to-day on view, in the otherwise bare and ugly rooms, were by three Frenchmen who were popular just at present in Russia. Carlo Vernet, his younger brother Horace, and the portraits painted here some years before by Joseph de Maistre. whose daughter, Countess de Laval, now held the salon most French in Petersburg.

When the carriage was announced at the Narischkin Palace, it found Sophie Narischkin ready and waiting. At that moment her mother entered. She wore a large lace hat upon her curly head, and in her corsage a bouquet of fresh, dewy, red roses just sent by Alexander. She told her daughter with a sort of nervous haste, always a little impressed by the clear, truthful eyes she confronted, that she would have to drive on without her and meet Alexander at the Exhibit. They were, as of course her daughter knew, leaving town in the morning, and she would be obliged to call at her dressmaker's on the way. She had quite forgotten, until just now, about the necessity to do this. She insisted, however, upon Sophie going on immediately in the wait-

ing carriage. She herself would take another carriage, she explained, and come to join them as soon as the engagement with the dressmaker was at an end. She seemed impatient for her daughter to go. She was eager in fact to be rid of her. Her daughter knew only too well what this meant, this freedom and safety to do as she pleased, while the rest of her friends were busily engaged elsewhere. She knew, too, that argument would be useless. She drove away without her.

Alexander was outside the Engelhardt Salon in his carriage awaiting her. She looked at him with the old thrill of mingled love and pride.

"But — *my darling* — surely you have been ill since I saw you?" the grave, sweet voice with its deep heart tones questioned.

"No, indeed! I am quite well" — not mentioning the hemorrhage of so short a time before.

"But — *to me* — you look ill — or *changed*. What is the matter, darling?" — the old fear clutching frantically at his heart.

"Is it not this dress?" To conceal her increasing thinness from his kind, wise eyes, she had had gowns made of colored gauze, with long sleeves shirred on both sides to the wrist, and high, shirred collars. The one she wore to-day was dark blue.

"Perhaps it is, dear!" — grasping at anything that would drive away for a moment the fear he did not have the strength to confront. "Where is your mother?" — hastily, a new surprise in his eyes. "She promised to meet me here."

"I merely came on ahead; that is all — in order not to keep you waiting. She is with her dressmaker," she fabricated hesitatingly. "She will be here very soon."

"I am sorry she could not come with you." There was regret in his voice.

"She will not be late, I assure you." She could not meet his eyes as she said this. She felt small and mean. She was forced to the untruth to save him. They entered the Exhibition together now, and the whisper was passed around:

"*The Emperor is here!*"

All eyes were now turned upon the eloquent figure of Alexander. Members of the court circle hastened to pay their re-

spects. Young Prince Odojewsky led Sophie Narischkin triumphantly away to show her a picture which had impressed him. It was Horace Vernet's dramatic canvas "Mazeppa," the one showing the naked body of the hero bound to a horse which hungry wolves with red, out-lolling tongues were following with eagerness to destroy.

"Do you know, Mademoiselle Narischkin, why that picture impresses me so?" questioned his frail, somewhat effeminate voice. She turned toward him kind eyes that comprehended. "It is because those ravening wolves, with their pointed, lecherous tongues, are the griefs that have followed me since the death of my mother. That is just the way I feel! The picture tells it." The last words trembled in his throat. Grief was choking him. "I knew you would understand." He looked at her gratefully. "It comforts me to see you."

She on her part thought then, without daring like him the satisfaction of expression, that the wolves were like the fears, the mental torments that beset her. Only in her case they had overtaken and caught her. And now they were eating her up.

Prince Odojewsky was sensitive and gentle. She liked him. He was blond, too, and young like herself. Baratinsky, poet and nobleman, with the dark, supple beauty of an Asiatic, was bowing before her. She remembered his love-song and her heart responded. He had the deep, arresting, eloquent eyes that belong to desert races. There was something about them that echoed in her heart. He had been greatly delighted, he told her, with the chalk drawings which the younger Vernet had made of the head of Napoleon. He was just on the point of asking her to go to look at them with him, when the younger of the brothers Mouravieff-Apostol, the one with the sensitive mouth that trembled so easily, came to tell her to be sure not to miss Horace Vernet's picture of Prince Poniatowsky on horseback by the banks of the Elster. He went on to explain, with boyish enthusiasm, that one of the pupils of Horace Vernet had seen this very scene, just the moment before the Prince leaped from the white horse he was riding into the river to his death. From this description Vernet had made the painting.

Mouravieff-Apostol was the grandson of a famous hetman. Therefore things Polish appealed to him. He had inherited, too, a little of his distinguished father's art-sense.

Baratinsky was sorry he could not have her to himself awhile. Some one always took her away. It was his usual luck. He was always planning, scheming to be alone with her. But she seemed as elusive as she was frail physically. Lately he knew she was worried about something. He longed dully to shield her, to help her. But, of course, some one came and took her from him. He was always baffled. There was never any chance for him.

This group of young people were sympathetic temperamentally. They enjoyed each other. They sought each other's society. Alexander looked over from time to time and saw them. He wished dully that it was one of these young men his daughter was to marry, and not Count Schuvalow, for whom he felt more and more an antipathy he could not conquer. Of the three he would have selected Prince Odojewsky. Yet he knew that young Baratinsky was more than fond of her.

Sophie Narischkin, while apparently listening politely and with interest to what was being said to her, and replying intelligently enough, was wondering why her mother did not come. The time was too long now. It would soon begin to arouse suspicion. Why had she done this? And to-day! And *where* was she? She had seen Count Schuvalow, at a distance, down a cross-street, on horseback, with some of his men friends, as she drove here. So she was not with him. Then with whom was she? *Could it be Lasky?* He was in the city now, she knew, rehearsing for an early fall opening. She had read it in the "Petersburg News." Had she driven in a hired carriage, which no one could recognize, to the rooms of Lasky? Had she been so foolish, so reckless? She believed in her heart that that was where she was. She could not well doubt her recklessness now. It was Lasky she was so crazy over. It was Lasky she was with! Fear overwhelmed her.

Count Alexis Orlow, Prince Viazemsky, and Schukowsky the poet now made their appearance. They told her young companions merrily that they had been permitted to monopolize her

long enough. Schukowsky stayed only a moment, however. He was one of the ugliest-featured men she ever saw, with a face like a Chinese puzzle. But she liked him as every one else liked him because of the nobility of his heart. She admired his writing, too. He hoped she would look attentively at Carlo Vernet's drawing of the valley of the Po. It was one of the set belonging to his scenes from the Italian Campaigns of Napoleon. It was as good as a trip to Italy. It had given him pleasure. It was like visiting the battle-ground of the Conqueror. He hoped it would give her pleasure, too. He bowed with old-fashioned grace, and went on.

Prince Viazemsky, of the penetrating gray eyes and bitter tongue that spared no one, she did not like any better than her father liked him. She had about the same attitude toward him. He was always finding that humanity was baser than he thought it. But he was a man of comprehensive cultivation and no slight poetical gift. He had a scornful, disillusioned mind which shocked her. He railed at everything and everybody. His sarcastic, revealing witticisms were current coin of mental exchange in the society he frequented.

He inquired politely about her health. She knew he did not believe her when she said that she was well. Then he hoped, with an inflection of voice that asked a question without daring to hope for an answer, to see, *later*, her mother. She felt that this was a spider-web trap for her unwary tongue. She ignored the stressed word. She spoke hastily of their departure on the morrow for the summer home by the Gulf of Finland. After she said this she knew that it was wrong. She wished she had not said it. It told him that this was her mother's last afternoon in town. The sly old fox knew that she would not waste it. He knew perfectly well to what use she would put it. He did not remain long after this. He soon left her alone with Count Orlow. He, perhaps, had merely wished to assure himself of something.

Count Alexis Orlow was a great gentleman, a trained courtier, older than Viazemsky, and graver; blond, and retrospectively handsome. She felt that he had a peculiar, mole-like quality of burrowing into the mind secrets of people which one must guard against. He was slightly of the old school in conversation, which

rather pleased her. She liked the courtly, deferential men of the past. She did not find him unpleasant. He declared he knew that her mind was occupied with something foreign to the pictures, noticing the shadows that were flitting across her youthful face. He laughingly begged her to confide in him, and asked abruptly if he were not correct. Why did she not tell him what it was, he insisted. Surely it was safe to confide in an old man like him.

She knew on the instant that he wished to find out if she knew what sort of a person her mother was, and especially what she was doing at this moment, when he knew the Emperor was expecting her here. And that was exactly what he was meditating about. In fact, this question had been a most absorbing one with him of late. He and Prince Viazemsky were never tired of discussing the subject pro and con, and the evident blindness of Alexander. He wondered if it were this knowledge or ill-health that made her sad, meditative. All his conversation was a polite, far-away attempt to satisfy this curiosity. Did she, or did she not know? And if she knew, what did she think? Would she tell Alexander? Or would she help conceal it?

Viazemsky was the talkative Russian, greedy for news, for human observations, happenings, because his ancestors had lived upon lonely estates in the country and had lacked companionship. Count Alexis Orlow, on the other hand, was impelled by a different motive. He had a hobby. He loved emotions, especially the emotions of women, just as he loved swords, war, horses, gorgeous uniforms, and his huge, velvet-hung palace, with its pictures, its marbles. It was a stimulus which he needed and sought. He procured it for himself just as he procured his favorite wine. He amused himself by watching them, by dissecting, like the virtuoso he was, the petty impulses that led to these emotions. That was what he was busying himself with mentally now, while he was looking down into the honest, childish, blue eyes of Sophie Narischkin.

Prince Viazemsky had passed on. He was now pausing in front of the picture of Madam Pushkin, painted by Joseph de Maistre, when Alexis Sergiewitch was four years old. It was a

glowing canvas, a sort of gorgeous bloom from a tropic jungle. It was an arresting picture even to the casual observer, who cared nothing for art. It was, perhaps, a trifle perverse. It showed the erratic, unexpected flowering of equatorial blood in an Arctic land, where its strangeness had been still further heightened by wealth, by leisure. It was troubling, unique, but at the same time attractive. A chance passer asked Prince Viazemsky, audaciously, what he thought of it. The reply was no less audacious: "Can you wash a negro white?"

The lazy, handsome, dissipated, youthful face of Pushkin's father was beside it. The eyes were shining with suppressed eagerness to talk, to gossip. It showed remarkable zest for life.

Madam Woronzow was next in line, charming, queenly, frivolous. She was the care-free aristocrat, the superior one, whom no cry of the masses could reach. She was painted as she lived, throned above them in a sort of imperial disdain. And for most of the moral laws she kept the same lofty disdain.

Prince Viazemsky bent his aristocratic head carefully over the pencil sketches that showed Napoleon. The fine lines of scorn that marked his mouth were lessened. But he did pause to think that Vernet was one of the first artists whom Napoleon had decorated. He looked long at the dashing "Poniatowsky" whose name recalled to him the many lovers of Catherine the Great. Few could draw a horse better than Vernet, he knew. He reflected that he was one of the great battle painters of France. Something of the respect he felt was expressed in his face. He knew, too, that Horace Vernet adored poetry and liked to think he used his brush as poets their pens. And because he prided himself upon his exact knowledge, he was mentally estimating how many of these pictures had been exhibited before and how many were new. The only flattery Prince Viazemsky really enjoyed was that which he gave himself. No matter how strained might be his relations with others, he was usually on good terms with himself.

The young men belonging to the two secret societies were out in force, all except Pestel and Kakhovsky. They could find no pleasure in so gentle and unselfish a thing as art. There was

something about all of them that impressed an onlooker with the fact, that although they were young in years, most of them, they had had no youth. It had been destroyed by dissipation. Mentally, emotionally, they had grown old too fast.

Ryleiev, the elder Mouravieff-Apostol, Prince Odojewsky, and young Baratinsky were studying the pictures with interest. They were discussing animatedly the dominant traits of Latin painters. The canvases showed the highly perfected art-sense of France. Prince Odojewsky was enthusiastic over the brothers Vernet. "They were born with hands, with eyes which were trained for this," he declared. "On both sides their ancestors were artists, draughtsmen. Horace Vernet first opened his eyes in the palace in which there were the best paintings of France. It takes two or three generations — *of specialization* — to lift artistic power to a height that is really of consequence. *Look at the soldiers* — in this one — *here!* No one has known how to portray the soldier as these men have."

"That is all very well," objected Baratinsky with profounder critical acumen. "But there is a certain point of what you call *style* that none of the Vernet family reached — to my mind."

"I agree with Baratinsky," chimed in Ryleiev. "They have loved the applause of the crowd too much to choose with sufficient care. Besides — *great art* is not produced so *facilely*. It came a little too easy to them. The fine frenzy — of what, for a better term, you might call *of the soul*. Don't you say so, Baratinsky?"

Baratinsky agreed a little too hastily; while Prince Odojewsky added:

"Horace Vernet is young at the game yet. Wait awhile, boys! *Wait awhile!*"

They enjoyed most the pictured faces of men of the Slav race seen independently through a French painter's brush; men like Count Woronzow, General Ravesky, Kutusov, Prince Galitzin, Sergius Lvovitch Pushkin, a peculiar mingling of modern France and savage Muscovy. Another reason they enjoyed these portraits is because their race is interested solely in people.

The great, humane heart of Ryleiev looked out of his poet's eyes somewhat sadly to-day. But he was dressed showily and in

bad taste as usual. He was regretting just now, in a way that made him suffer, the plotting that was in progress against the life of Alexander, whose aristocratic noble form his eyes followed with an artist's sensitive pleasure. In the light of the moment, he glimpsed the plot's baseness. He was vaguely wishing that he could run away from the country and get out of it all. Sometimes he wished he were dead. He was tired of the prolonged struggle of life with duty.

"Look at the Emperor now!" he whispered to Prince Odojewsky on a sudden; "standing there alone, *in profile*, against that wall!"

The eyes of his young companion turned slowly from the pictures and obeyed his order. He had felt a certain thrill in the voice of Ryleiev, who continued, sure of sympathetic understanding in the poet, Prince Odojewsky:

"Faces whose physical beauty was like that of Alexander, my friend, looked down from the marble of old Athenian friezes, or else — out of delicate, patiently carved Alexandrian gems. Believe me — we shall not soon again see such an one," he added sadly. "How dull we are — you and I — *and the rest!*

"Imagine, will you," he explained in a tone which scorn of self and his fellow-men dominated, "a handsome Greek athlete — who looks like the ones who used to win in the games — so flexibly, so symmetrically is he formed, dressed in an ugly, uncomfortable Russian military uniform, and poised upon the awkward, uncertain edge of a social-political upheaval. And *we* blame him! Who could hope to understand such a puzzling situation? Who *could control it?*" The words made the same deep impression upon his hearers that the thought had made upon him. In the eyes of some of them there was regret mingled with shame.

"Can you get ahead of that for reasonless contrasts, my friends? Can you get ahead of that!"

They did not reply. They, too, perhaps, were thinking something similar only they did not have the courage to say it.

"And in his heart," after a pause added Odojewsky, "there is something nobler than in his body."

Alexander had now circled the room. He had examined the

paintings with pleasure and with intelligent comprehension. He found upon the walls the pictured faces of former friends, former youthful acquaintances, not only of Russia, but whom he had known years ago, in Paris, in his boyhood. He looked carefully at the numerous sketches of Napoleon, whom he generously called the world's greatest organizer. He looked at Italian landscapes which he had loved and visited. Carlo Vernet had outspread patiently, truthfully, vast expanses of towns, of country. He admired the powerful, the fresh brushing-in, of Horace Vernet, who was one of the first to begin to break the iron classic tradition, and whose expansive soul was hypnotized by love of distant countries, exotic scenes, and the tragic episodes of history. He enjoyed thoroughly these fine expressions of Latin genius.

He had reached the side of his daughter again. With her were two old gentlemen, faithful friends of the family, *grands seigneurs* of an earlier reign: Count Bobrinsky, now seventy-five years old, the son of Catherine the Great and that proud professional beauty, her lover, Gregory Orlow; and Count Cyril Razumowsky, usually slightly sentimental, his companion, who was a nephew of the morganatic husband of the lovely dead Empress of the mid-eighteenth century, Elizabeth Petrowna. Men of the old school liked to associate together, in these days of social disparity. Count Bobrinsky of the old days and Prince Viazemsky of the present could not understand each other. Mentally, they were centuries apart. Society was broken up now into numberless definite groups, marking every degree of shading from the old opinions and way of living to the most reactionary upholders of what is newest.

"Surely Madam Narischkin is not coming!" Alexander remarked in a dull, disappointed voice to his daughter, somewhat questioningly. She was glad that Prince Viazemsky and Count Alexis Orlow were not beside them to hear this remark, but were now watching them instead from a little distance. She could not think of anything to reply that seemed satisfactory. She was saved the necessity luckily, however, by the rapid, somewhat breathless entry of Marie Antonova herself. Sophie Narischkin

looked at her sharply, quickly. The delicate, wire-held edge of her large lace hat was bent slightly. The roses Alexander sent, which had been so fresh when she started, were completely crushed now, and, worst of all, pinned on in a different place. It was evident at once, to her trained, appraising eyes, that Marie Antonova was not her usual poised self, that she was more than a little confused at meeting so suddenly this battery of eyes. Alexander saw nothing of this, however. He smiled down upon her tenderly, and held out a hand in glad greeting.

"I have had the most annoying time!" she pouted. "The draping of one of my gowns was wrong. She misunderstood me — *the modiste* — entirely. It had to be taken off and draped over again! The model was gone, as bad luck would have it. I had to stand for all the redraping myself. I was forced to do it — *to remain right there until it was done* — because we are leaving to-morrow. I am so sorry to be late!" She looked nervously about to judge of the effect of this impromptu explanation. Her daughter knew at once that it was a lie. She knew that back of it was some fresh indiscretion. She wondered wildly if the others knew it too.

"It was too bad for you to miss the pictures," the voice of Alexander was replying gently, with evident intention to calm her. The more her daughter observed her, the more signs she saw of her mother's agitation and her hasty dressing.

"It is getting too late for me to make the round of the gallery again," Alexander was declaring gently. Marie Antonova was secretly glad. Pictures bored her. But she smiled sympathetically her regret. Sophie Narischkin knew that smile. It usually meant dust successfully flung in some one else's eyes, a triumph which it was impossible to acknowledge.

Count Bobrinsky and Count Cyril Razumowsky greeted her politely. They blandly paid her the social compliments she was accustomed to hear. It was a part of their tradition and training.

Count Alexis Orlow and Prince Viazemsky, under pretense of examining critically another picture, had drawn perceptibly nearer. Sophie Narischkin saw this move. She knew what it

meant. It was really her mother whom they wished to observe critically, and not the picture at all. She understood.

"Notice the light in her eyes," remarked Viazemsky in a whisper, "*and her hair!*"

"Yes," replied Count Orlow, "and the slippers she could put off and on quickly — *without a maid.* And the Grecian robe, sparsely fastened down the front."

"Where do you think she was, Orlow?"

"Not with Schuvalow!" replied Viazemsky with decision. "I saw him in the street as I came here."

"Then it must be Lasky."

"Lasky? Yes, probably."

"She does not put the slightest sense in her affairs. Nothing but caprice, passion, enter into them. *No plan!* No forwarding of ambition! No fear — no consideration of consequences — *nothing.*"

"It is just as if she had no head at all. She flies ahead like a sailboat with the wind," declared the discriminating Prince angrily. "I have studied her, and other women of her stamp, because of a certain pleasure the study gives me — for a long time, Viazemsky. Passion, I tell you, with Marie Antonova is a drug which dilutes the reality of the unpleasant but necessary wearinesses of life. It is the narcotic which her weak but slightly vicious nature demands. It dulls her, pleasurably, to duties of all kinds, which she detests. And it is largely a physical question with her, too, do you not think so? It is a need that must be supplied, like food, and of which she thinks — if she ever thinks about anything — with no more shame, or misgiving."

"But her daughter is not deceived by her any more, the way Alexander is!" declared Viazemsky with conviction. "I have seen it in her face to-day for the first time. Believe me — *she knows.* She was worried for fear her mother would not get here on time, and Alexander would drive away and happen upon her in a hired carriage — in some questionable locality. She was worried, too, about her personal appearance as she entered. Did you not observe her? Did you not see with what critical eyes she looked at her?"

"You may be right, Viazemsky! I rather think you are right."

"The daughter is not only finer, but far more intelligent than the mother."

The too hastily arrayed appearance of Marie Antonova was not lost, either, upon the two wise old worldlings who had just addressed her after the manner of men of their inherited position and courtly habits. They knew her as the others knew her. Alexander alone was innocent of what was going on in the minds of his associates. He was happy as usual in her mere presence.

"There is an important matter awaiting decision in my cabinet," Alexander was explaining. "If you do not care to remain longer, I will see you both to your carriage. I came only for the pleasure of being with you a little while," directing the words to Marie Antonova. She signified her readiness to go, without looking at him, and they walked toward the door together.

When the two women were seated in the carriage, Alexander leaned toward Marie Antonova, and told her happily that the important work awaiting him pertained to his now fully matured plan of spending some weeks alone with them by the Gulf of Finland, while the Empress and her ladies-in-waiting and some of the court were still at Tsarskoje Selo, where they had gone early in the spring.

This piece of news delighted Sophie Narischkin. She looked at him with loving eyes. He, however, looked tenderly at Marie Antonova, expecting her to say something, to be glad, too. Marie Antonova was apathetic. She was indifferent. She was too eager to get home to care what anybody wanted. But as usual he did not notice her mood, a thing which his daughter had recently told herself that he never seemed to do, no matter how marked it might be. This showed how great was his love, his trust. He believed unquestioningly that her affection for him was as great as his for her. It was just this quality of deep, abiding faith which touched the heart of his daughter. He left them with the happy promise of joining them as early as the next day but one, by the Gulf of Finland.

As they drove rapidly homeward, Sophie Narischkin observed carefully the indifferent, to-day slightly dissipated, face

of her mother, who was so busy thinking her own thoughts, thoughts which always excluded her, the daughter.

She was surprised to find that the great mass of her mother's black curls was not fastened up at all, but instead merely shoved hastily under the hat which held it. The curliness somewhat covered up the disorder. She hoped wildly that no one else had observed this. The crushed red roses had left wet, dirty stains along the front of her dress. She understood better now the ill-concealed confusion of her entrance, which could not be delayed longer, and which she was forced to make.

But it was terrible, this clear, disillusioned seeing, which was hers for the moment, this sudden snatching away from her eyes of the protecting veils of illusion and happiness. It was like living in a roofless house in a land where the rain fell continually.

For a moment she envied Alexander his happy innocence and the faith that accompanied it. She wished she too could have it back again.

CHAPTER IX

DAWN ON THE ACKERMANN STEPPE

"It is a crowd of horsemen. *Russian cavalry*, as I live!"

"Are you sure?" questioned Sari.

"Yes! I can see the uniforms plainly," replied Alexis Sergiewitch.

"They must have been sent by Count Woronzow to find you and bring you back," declared the gypsy.

"*Let them search!* I don't care! They cannot find me."

This conversation took place a little more than a year later, after the dramatic duel in the cherry orchard. It had been a year of friction and unhappiness. Count Woronzow, according to his conception of duty, had kept on trying to make a conventional keeper of accounts out of Alexis Sergiewitch whose mind did not reach beyond the two gray canvas covers of his ledger, and who was devoted to obedience, accuracy, and order. He could not do it because it was impossible. He was disappointed. Never before had he been given such refractory material.

He set out to accustom him to regular, to daily toil. He wished to make him appreciate the reasonable rewards of patience, of discipline. In this young land, Russia, where there was so much to be done in the way of material labor, in developing, in upbuilding a country which was rich and new, there must, of course, be countless young men, just like Alexis Sergiewitch, whose personality, whose independent living must be crushed for the purpose of making them dutiful, unrebelling slaves. Count Woronzow believed that this was not only right, but necessary. It meant the preserving, the developing of his native land. He had given up his life to this despite the opportunities for freedom, for leisure, his colossal wealth offered. Why should not others do the same?

If he was occasionally harsh, it was because his effort to be just toward all was great. No one under him could eat the bread of

his blessed Master without giving a return in labor. But with Alexis Sergiewitch he could do nothing. He would neither work nor obey. And not only this, but he was going the limit in every excess. He had been leading the wildest kind of life since he came to Bessarabia. He had caused old Count Woronzow sleepless nights and days of worry. He did not think the work assigned him was of importance. He looked down upon it with a sort of contempt. Alexander had trusted this wayward youth to him to be reformed. But try as he would he could do nothing with him. There was nothing to do but confess failure. He who had gone bravely to battle with Napoleon must confess to failure in the person of this slender youth. That discipline, that honor, to which he had given belief throughout his life, were useless here. He wondered from time to time if he would be able to explain to Alexander why he had failed, just why the young man was so insubordinate.

He saw plainly that in Alexis Sergiewitch there vibrated emotions, passions, mightier than the power of civilization to subdue or dominate. He understood, after these weary months of experimenting, that sometimes the call of his black blood, the inherited past in him, outweighed the present or any present-day consideration. In him there was something entirely different from the other boys in his Counting-Room, who daily sat upon their tall stools as they were bidden, and figured. There was a contradictory, resentful, dominant power of life such as can be found only under tropical suns. Count Woronzow knew, of course, that his ancestors on one side, the Russian side, had been tent-men from the cityless uplands of Asia, where the thirst of the desert is great; restless nomads, next, of old Muscovy; and on the other side from the black lands of Africa.

He kept wondering if he could explain this satisfactorily to Alexander. He must explain! It was not his habit to confess futility or failure. He was seeing more clearly, too, that people who create æsthetically — and especially if they can create with power — must in some way be closer to the unnamed forces of nature, which man cannot change so easily or make over for his approbation. There must be in them, along with the cultivation

of their own day, the seemingly inharmonious combination of the child and the savage. When the connecting proof cannot be in this life, one may be assured that some unweighed law of nature has swept upon them the motive-power of the past. He saw, in short, when he could not explain to his own conscience Pushkin's unreasoning insubordination, his contradictory traits of character, that he would have to fall back upon unexplored, unexplained ethnic laws, profound, organic.

He could not make him work with regularity. It was impossible. He had some of the faithlessness, the lack of dependable persistency which characterizes the black people. With them pleasure will slip in between just like sunlight through the chinks of a hut. He lacked, too, the moral energy, the purpose of direction, of the white races. He saw this clearly now after so many months of observation, of discouraging experience, but the question was, would the dispatches he had been sending to Petersburg make the Government understand it too? Alexis Sergiewitch resembled a new variety of peach-tree which he had imported recently, and whose roots would not take hold readily of Russian soil.

One day, after a particularly wild night of gambling and quarreling in the *Kabak* of *Samus*, where Alexis Sergiewitch had not only lost so heavily that he had begun to pawn his clothing, but had created a disturbance that was setting tongues wagging, he thought of sending him to Ismail, to the fortress there, for discipline. When this was reported to Alexis Sergiewitch, he felt rather pleased than otherwise. The Oriental name, the far unknown place to the south by the shore, tickled his romantic sense. It made him dream of adventure. He felt a hero of romance. Then, too, the name reminded him of one of his childhood's heroes, Suwarow, and that general's military feats there. His grandfather had told him endless stories of poor, old, bent, grumbling, rheumatic-bodied Suwarow, who soaked his feet, said his prayers, and planned the bloody massacre of Ismail. In Ismail he would be out of sight and hearing, for a time at least, while gossip subsided in Kishenev.

But Count Woronzow did not send him there. Another of his

hobbies intervened. This time it was his devotion to service. There Pushkin would be useless save for the fact that he would suffer merited punishment. But punishment for its own sake was waste. He must unite punishment with service. In this way he would be serving his government twice in one act. After some more confused and not too pleasant meditation, in which he prayed repeatedly to be freed from anger and be given vision, he decided to send him on a mission through southern Bessarabia to report upon the injury the locusts were doing to the young fruit-trees which had been planted by his order.

This command enraged Alexis Sergiewitch. He lost his head. He saw in it merely a desire to humiliate him. He fell into a passion of unreasoning temper. A poet, a dandy of the great world like himself, a leader of fashion, to spend a summer counting little black bugs upon peach-trees! He would not do it. His stormy and excitable nature rose in rebellion. He wrote a curt note of refusal to Count Woronzow and ran away.

And just at that dramatic moment he thought of Sari of the summer before, and how one night in the *Kabak* of *Samus*, she had pointed out, when they were standing by the door together where the green-painted scythes were piled, the direction of their gypsy *tabor;* "Down there — beyond Jacob Eisenstein's *meierhof*," she had said. He joined them as they were breaking camp and starting south. That had been several days ago. Now he and Sari were sitting comfortably together in the back of the front wagon that led the way, while a herd of untethered saddle horses trotted after them. He was wearing gypsy clothes like the rest of the men. A red handkerchief was over his head and tied under his chin. Over this he wore his hat, and Sari had laughed and insisted upon making, with a coal, very black eyebrows for him to whom nature did not give any. Now his face was tanned and wind-burned. He was as black as the others.

General Ingoff, with a detachment of cavalry, sent to find him and bring him back, dashed by with noisy uprearing of horses' hoofs as they passed the untied ponies, which proceeded to stampede. They pirouetted upon their thoroughbreds like a Moorish "fantasia" on the edge of the desert. Alexis Sergiewitch looked

boldly out at the old man's dull, sluggish blue eyes with the round, protruding flesh-sacks beneath them. He saw his red pouchy cheeks like a little red squirrel's distended with nuts, they were so close together. He felt happy and gay at the successful deception, and very safe. His heart laughed within him. He tightened gayly the arm that encircled Sari.

After General Ingoff and his men had whirled on and out of sight, Sari's father, who was driving the head wagon, left the road. He turned southeast toward Ismail, where he plunged in among the pathless grasses. Sometimes these grasses were so high that it gave them the sensation of swimming. Scents of earth, of leaves, were in his nostrils. Here, once in a while, they passed a lonely, detached *izba*, that looked as if it were lost. Flocks of blue-legged quail, which are poisonous and not fit to eat, started up with terror, spread out their short wings and scampered away. Flocks of birds swept over their heads, on their way to the lush marshes of the South. Once they caught glimpse of a distant caravan whose wagons were drawn by huge Mongolian camels, which even at a distance looked ragged and shabby at this season, because their winter coat had fallen off in patches. Then the unmarked loneliness began and did not end.

After they had traveled toward the southeast for days, still in the direction of Ismailow, where they were comfortably sure of not encountering traveling merchant caravans or a detachment of border soldiery headed by Greek officers on duty of inspection, a crevasse or small cañon, in which were trees and running water, broke diagonally the level monotony of grass. Here they camped.

After the unhappy, exasperating year in Kishenev, this was a great relief. There they had tried to make Pushkin live like a convict. They had hounded him day and night. He had been under sharp and irritating supervision. He had had no liberty except what he stole, and then paid for in punishment, in imprisonment in the Guard-House. Every movement had been spied upon, then reported.

And now came this, this blessed Eden; freedom from duty, freedom from obligation of every kind. He decided impulsively

that this was the life for which he was made. He would not go back to civilization. He would give up the white man's existence, which is largely legalized slavery at best. With the gypsies he would keep to the life of pagan nature. He would be free, happy, untrammeled. Pleasure was the only life that he could comprehend. Just now this gave him pleasure. Because of his sensitiveness, his adaptability, he was influenced as usual by anything that made him happy for a moment. And it was usually easy for him to justify himself just as he was doing now. Restraint, civilized living, restrictions, are for the mediocre, he kept telling himself. They could not have anything permanently lasting with a person like him. He was able at length to reach the pleasant, the self-laudatory conclusion that it takes a certain amount of dullness to lead a well-regulated life. Dullness is to life what blinders are to a horse was his last flattering deduction. They shut off the alluring vision of the forbidden roads one should not travel. With this he flung himself heart and soul into the life about him. And there was much in it, in truth, that suited him.

Now that inherited past was not only calling him, but claiming him. Atavistic flesh-memories, which he did not understand, were beginning to move dimly within him. Contact with the wild stirred turbulent longings and emotions. Sometimes, over his subconscious self, when sunset was dyeing the vast levels about him, there swept, as invisible wind sweeps and then shivers the surface of water, but far below the insistent boundary of speech, forgotten cell-memories of the colors of Africa, that land so wonderful in hue-tingling sensations — like a delirium — too powerful and too fleeting for words to express. For a swift instant it was as if his spirit glimpsed the ancient, astounding sunsets of the desert. Vast visions piled up within him, towering, trembling, like the huge, up-piled, white, Quixote cloud-castles of summer. And then at touch of passion which enslaved him, at touch of the hand of Sari, they crumbled, they fell. The ennobling sensation lost its gold. It was transmuted into base metal.

The camping place was the level land by the edge of the cañon. Here he and Sari slept upon a blanket. A tree growing lower

down within the wall of the cañon-side, hung over them like a roof. Sometimes, when the metallic sheen of the heat lightning of late summer brightened the night, he could see the strange, ice-green eyes of Sari, whose color never ceased to be a surprise. She had the round, somewhat dry, muscled superiority of body which is the property of races not white, and who have not known padded luxury. He who had lived always amid the false, the borrowed graces, the exaggerated luxury of a hastily imitated civilization, appreciated this unmasked vigor, this sincerity. Sari's hair smelled like camp-smoke, and her clothing slightly, too. Before they went to sleep he used to watch the leaping camp-fire, over which the evening meal had been cooked, playing over bronze bodies, or even spangling with bright green the swinging branches, the soft leaves above their heads. Or the stars drew near. They began to glow with a sympathetic luster, which loosened the tongues of the story-tellers.

Then the throbbing voice of the nightingale dominated them, like the pulse of night. The night seemed to come to life, and the leaves above their heads whispered wildly. When the song and the whispering leaves were stilled, there was a silence so mysterious, so weighty, it was as if caused by some new, some mighty power of which he had never heard. And late, late, a large round yellow moon would come swinging dizzily out of the unknown, ploughing the blacknesses about them, and gilding caressingly the levels. And always there was the night voice of grasses, grasses that swept southward in unbroken vigor to the shore of the Black Sea. There were haunting, shifting, frail sounds, too, he could not name nor catalogue. He was confronted with the language of nature, which only the unself-assertive, the humble, learn well. Here was a world he did not know existed.

And the mind and nature of Sari were just as far away from his comprehension, just as new, just as strange and interesting, as the unlearned speech of nature. Of love, of emotion, of the fine things of the heart, she had just the same understanding as the nightingale which was singing above them. And yet the very difference pleased him.

Sometimes, when she was not sullen, she told him the names her people had given to the flowers about their bed. The violet they called the "flower of the night." He kissed her at this. He told her that that was what she was to him, *his flower of the night.* But in gypsy clothes he did not enchant her as he had that magic night of summer long ago in the *Kabak* of *Samus*, when he wore the white piqué and the fine cambric of Petersburg which had so delighted her. His hands were not so white now nor so heavily ringed. And they did not finger a cigarette case of gold. Nor was his hair perfumed and exquisite. In short, he looked just like all gypsies such as she had always seen. The charm was broken. It was the new, the untried, or the alluring that Sari wished.

She confided to him her longing for a silk head-kerchief of white and gold. Also she hoped sometime, *in the winter*, when even down south by the shore of the sea, or by Ismail under the wall, it rained too often and was cold, to have a lover who had a house. It was frightful sleeping out in the winter — or even in the wagon. Always wet — always uncomfortable. But in summer — *no!* There was no other way to sleep — *in summer.*

One night, upon a sudden, they heard the wild, impassioned note of a violin, ending as speedily as it began. For a second, until she found out who made the music, her eyes darted green fire, just like a cat's. Some tremendous emotion swayed her. "*I thought it was Yancksi!*" she gasped, as she lay down beside him again.

And sleep was so good upon the ground, the heavy, dreamless sleep, with the age-old magnetism of the earth upon them. And it was good to open his eyes, morning after morning, with Sari beside him, and look out across a vast, green land, inspiring, refreshing — a vast, primitive land, where man has left no mark any more than he has left a mark upon the sea; where duty is not, nor law with its bristling restrictions. And the joy, too, each morning of the wind upon his face, wind frolicsome and free, and that called to him with the voice of youth. Sometimes, in the first deceiving light of early day, the ragged, ill-dressed gypsies upon their shaggy ponies, going slowly down the sloping cañon-

side for water, became superb, dramatic figures, and for the moment were fine. Looking out across the distance, he learned that any lonely little figure, black and moving among the grasses, possessed a certain eloquence of art. He was gaining broader, different, more impersonal vision. And the blessed peace of blue unmarked day following day — and *of love.*

Sari, whom once he had disdained, was becoming more and more necessary to him as passion forged unbreakable chains upon him. And the oneness of it all! This pleased him. There were no inequalities here. No rulers; no ruled. No one had more than the other. Home to all of them was the same, the little red point of flame around which at night, with the great blackness beyond, their food was cooked. He was rapidly learning nature's compensations for them who have nothing. And in this great immensity of nature the values of life began to change slowly, subtly. There were new virtues, new vices, and the ones that he had always been accustomed to were discarded of their own weight. Right and wrong became unstable. They were not evidently eternal things like the stars, as he had always thought them. In addition, there was enough of the Russian in him, in whom there is always something of the instinct of the wanderer, to become accustomed to anything. And he enjoyed greatly, too, the picture of his youthful self, with the sun of summer upon him, in the great free steppe filled with flowers and nodding grasses.

The father of Sari was more diligent and more intelligent than the other men of the *tabor,* who did nothing but hunt occasionally. He, on the contrary, worked. He made pipes; he made small ornaments of *kissel* wood which he inlaid with a good deal of taste with designs made of white bone, and which he sold successfully in the towns.

While the old man worked he liked to talk. He dispensed freely to Alexis Sergiewitch the unlearned philosophy of his race, the philosophy of nature's man.

"To be what you call *civilized,* Prince Alexis" — he had adopted Sari's first name for him — he explained one day, "is to become a voluntary slave. It is to be the subject continually of

petty tyranny, the slave of things that are not only false but foolish. The way to be happy and free at the same time is to have nothing — just like the birds — *except wings* — and that other freedom, which only lasts a minute — *youth*," he added a little sadly.

Alexis Sergiewitch was listening with attention. This was as firm and reasonable a plan for the guiding of life as that of Count Woronzow. And the old fellow possessed a dignity of his own, too, just as unshakable.

"We are wiser than your civilized man, whom we despise. You cannot fool us into thinking that one man is better than another because he happens to own a new coat — which again happens to be cut either long or short — or to be blue or brown. How does it change what *dwells inside* of a man whether his house is stone or wood, a palace or a hovel?" The other side of the human tapestry was being held up for young Alexis Sergiewitch to contemplate.

"We have not been corrupted by the white man's laws. Laws corrupt oftener than they cure. Laws are just like giving medicine to a well man. We are superior in many things. The gypsy has never learned to feel the duty of revenge. There are certain basenesses of soul that belong only to civilization. We have refused to learn this false, this civilized viewpoint. Of youth we say — why should it not be just as free as the bird? There is too much hypocrisy in the white man's morality. There is too much suffering, too much unfairness. And *then*, how does he know that he is right? We choose not to have any, because we prefer the genuine to the imitation. To escape law, to escape its restrictions, its corruptions, its injustice, we cheerfully give up all the comforts of life — warmth, shelter — soft living."

To his surprise Pushkin found that he had much to learn from the gypsies. Any living, evidently, that is sincere has points of justification. He was beginning to look down upon civilized follies with some of the grand disdain of the savage.

The old gypsy's beliefs were as well grounded as those of Count Woronzow. And he was just as faithful to them. He began to think that it takes a certain kind of unestimated ability to sup-

port, day after day, this complete inaction, a balance between mind and body which civilization has destroyed.

"While we do not play games like the civilized man, neither do we grieve nor rage like him. We do not laugh so much either. We are not so merry. We are not so ruled by fear. We are more like the inanimate things of nature in this — the trees, the flowers on the steppe — with which we live and from which we have learned by long association. Long association has drawn us nearer to them — made us become alike. A tree is not so different from a man, Prince Alexis! If we have not the white man's good qualities, neither have we his evil ones — his boasting, his cant, his hypocrisy, his highly developed cruelty, his unfairness."

Summer was drawing to an end. Alexis Sergiewitch, who had become fully accustomed to this life and its habits, paused in his general looking about, and began to observe Sari more critically. To his surprise he saw that she was waiting for something. She was like a wary animal on the point of being startled. In the depths of her cold green eyes were the shadows of memory. He could see them just as one can see dark objects through ice. Her ear caught quickest any sound that came upon the wind. She was alert for the near coming of something distant. Often, in the night, he knew that she was not sleeping, and he always knew now that she was not thinking of him. She was lying perfectly quiet, her arms folded under her head, with wide, open eyes watching the stars measure the slow course of night and time. Then it seemed to him that she did not sleep at all. She was not nervous. She merely waited, patiently, as an animal waits. In the day she looked too frequently and long toward the southeast, the direction of Ismail. He wondered what it was that made her do it and what she was thinking about. She did not try any more to conceal her indifference to him. He was evidently merely an incident of the season when the sun rides high, and there are huge, bright-colored blossoms splashing the steppe. He was just a part of sun and summer.

She did not play her *balalaika*. Nor did she idle. She worked industriously sewing four large yellow-plaid handkerchiefs she had bought in Kishenev into a basque, down the front of which

she sewed large, white, glass, square-cornered buttons. While she sewed she was mentally absorbed, and her mind was far away, or else turned inward upon something she remembered. She was busy retelling the emotions of the past.

One night, when they went to bed, the sound of the leaves above their heads was dry. Summer had gone. Far down in the bottom of the ravine below them, he could hear a wind in whose voice there was something that resembled a threat. Late in the night the surface of sleep was worn thin, and he awoke with a start. The place beside him was empty. Sari was gone. He arose to reconnoiter. It was a night of scudding clouds with filmy, unstable light. The ground was a restless checker-board of black and white. The camp were asleep. But one of the horses, the best one, that had followed the wagon, was gone. She must have made a good distance by now, he thought, because he could not hear a sound. He was stunned with anger. He was stunned with wounded pride, with grief. To be tricked like this — *by a gypsy*. He awoke the old man.

"Do you know where she is?" he asked excitedly. "One of the horses is gone, too!"

"She did n't tell me — but I know that she has gone to meet Yancksi."

"How could she know where to meet him?"

"We heard last summer, in Kishenev, from another tribe, that last winter he left Hungary — going down the great river — to winter in the South in the City of the Golden Horn. From there he sent word he was going to come by water to Ismail at the end of *this summer*. This is the end of summer — *now*."

So that was the reason of this journey toward the southeast, toward Ismail. He had thought all along that it had been taken for his sake. It was not for him at all. It was just to meet Yancksi — Sari's lover. He had been traveling all this time to meet him. The others, of course, knew this.

The face of Pushkin became black with rage. A fit of ungovernable anger took possession of him. "I will take another horse. I will find them. Then I will kill them, *both!*" — trembling so he could scarcely speak.

"Wait — my boy! *Wait!*" — placing a detaining hand upon his shoulder. "Did I not tell you that *youth is as free as the bird?* She will leave Yancksi too — *after a time* — and come back to you — if you wait. Things that are new, you know, are fine for women. Her mother used to do the same thing to me. But she always came back."

Alexis Sergiewitch, whose only guide was a fantastic sense of personal honor, in which pride was mixed, still declared his intention of revenge, still insisted that he would follow them, that he would kill them.

"Listen to me, Prince Alexis!" the old man responded sternly. "Take this horse, and return to the people from whom you came. *Over there*, not far away, is the road. Follow it north. In time you will come upon *tschoumaks* with their caravans, headed for Kishenev. They will let you ride to the city with them. They will feed you. Turn the horse loose. It will find its own way back to us.

"You are not fitted for our life. You cannot forget that ignoble belief of the white man — *revenge*," he declared solemnly. "While you ask freedom for yourself, you are not willing that other people should have it. We do not punish. We do not make others suffer under the pretext that we are right. We do not kill. But we will not live with a murderer! Take the horse and go. You cannot learn the wisdom of the savage. You are unfit to learn it. All you can understand is having your own way," he added solemnly. "And while you ride along, meditate upon this: *If you pluck a wild tulip upon the steppe in spring, does that make it impossible for any one else to pluck another wild tulip the next spring?*"

Life was so simple, so easy for them who had neither religion nor prejudice. It was not so easy to *unlearn* as to learn.

Unceremoniously he found himself thrust out of his Eden. He was alone on the highway headed toward Kishenev. He was bounced about from place to place like a rubber ball. Just as when he had been put out of Petersburg he had nothing to say about it, so he had nothing to say about it now. He did not fit in well either with civilized or uncivilized man. In fact, in the

mood of grief and anger that ruled him, he could not seem to think of any place where he did fit in, any place where he was permitted to live or be happy. He was a superfluity, something not wanted anywhere. There was a guiding wisdom for all people, it seemed, except for him.

He had been happy here. The life suited him. He hoped it would never end. Now it had been taken away from him, without consulting his wishes in the matter. He was just a coin tossed from hand to hand, with no will of his own. He was heartbroken. *And Sari* — the interrupted life with Sari! Grief, anger, unassuaged desire, blind passion, longing for revenge choked him. *Sari! Sari!* . . .

When, weeks later, with a slow merchant caravan, he entered Kishenev at night, he did not need either paint or gypsy clothing to disguise him. He was ragged, dirty, black from exposure, and so thin from emotion and hard living that no one would recognize the white, piqué-coated dandy of the summer before. He made his way at once to the *Kabak* of *Samus* for food and wine.

When he entered the *Kabak* the crowd within at the little round tables were perfectly still. They were hushed. They were listening with breathless attention to a sad and tragic figure, to a man who was improvising a song, a song which was a confession of his life. The man, who sat alone at a table, was young, too, like Alexis Sergiewitch. He had black curls, but his face was furrowed and marred with grief. It was tragic with suffering. Between every verse he sobbed aloud, and bent his head upon the dirty table slopped over with wine and food. Then he stood erect. He stretched out his arms to attract attention, and sang — sang recklessly for the unburdening relief of his soul. Over his chair was a blood-stained Caucasian shawl, black, with an embroidered border.

> Like a madman I stand here with eyes fixed on the shawl,
> While anger and anguish upon my heart fall.
>
> I was youthful in years then, scarcely more than a boy,
> When I gave my heart up to a Greek girl with joy.

She was sensuous and fair; I was proud of her love;
But the wings of misfortune spread darkling above.

I was sitting, gayly, with a guest, undisturbed,
When a Jew came and in my ear whispered a word.

"Proudly here with your friends you drink, not dreaming how
Your Greek girl with her lover is deceiving you now."

I curse the Jew roundly, but my purse at him fling,
And I order my servant the horses to bring.

We mount, we set off with the speed of the wind,
While madness takes hold of my heart and my mind.

I enter her chamber on tiptoe, and alone,
An Armenian embraces her as if she were his own.

She was lifting her lips for her new lover's kiss,
When with one blow I struck her fair head off with this.

I snatched from the quivering head this black shawl
And with it I wiped bright my long sword-blade all.

Since then I kiss no more eyes sweet as the skies;
Since then pleasure no more in long love nights lies.

Like a madman I stand here, with eyes fixed on the shawl,
While anger and anguish upon my heart fall.[1]

What terrible grief breathed from his face! What grief trembled upon his voice! No one would report the murder or its confession to Count Woronzow. Every one, on the contrary, would help conceal it. Murder meant exile for life in the mines of Siberia. Every listener here to-night in the *Kabak* of *Samus*, just like Alexis Sergiewitch, probably had some personal, some private memory that would temper judgment. The poor fellow had sobbed out his repentance here by the table in the wine-house, to a crowd of listeners who had understood. He had concealed nothing. He had received the consolation of confession. Now he would slip away. He would hide in the long, waving grass of the

[1] Translated from the Russian by the author.

interminable steppe, the trackless desert, and be forgotten, this man whom the tragedy of living, for a few vivid moments, had lifted to the power of expression of a poet.

Alexis Sergiewitch forgot his own grief in something that resembled thankfulness. If he had had his way, if something blessed had not intervened to save him, this fate, the fate of the murderer, would have been his to-night.

After he had eaten, he made his way wearily to the hill-street of the Old Town, and to the house of the Turkish woman. Here he could rest in hiding and recuperate. And here, while the first chill rains of autumn fell, and the leaves, and the wind became fitful and sad, he, too, made his confession; made it just as the poor murderer in the *Kabak* of *Samus* had made his, in song. He poured forth the story of his life with Sari, of that one brief summer spent in Eden. He wrote "The Gypsies." He who had moved in the court set was the first to discover the people. In writing it he broke away impetuously from the limitations of the age, just as he had broken away from the iron discipline of Count Woronzow. He broke away from the art-ideal of the day, and bravely sketched the quick, sure outline of something new that was to come, a kind of writing that would dominate the modern world, which he was the first to discover for art.

He recalled the song, too, "The Black Shawl." It was poetry not influenced either by Anacreon or French models, but *by life*. That was the way he would write in the future. He, too, would throw away models, stale school learning, and look out upon life and create.

CHAPTER X

BY THE GULF OF FINLAND

Sophie Narischkin enjoyed the day's drive to the summer home by the Gulf of Finland, and in a new way, a way in which she had not enjoyed anything before. The belief that another year was not likely to find her driving down this pleasant road of childhood, through the bright, buff, blue-dusted polar day, with the delight of the shining, keen sea-edge beyond, and the peaceful, green, planted farm-lands cozily nestling on either side, gave her the detached, impersonal outlook of a farewell. She looked lovingly at everything, with fresh interest, fresh comprehension, and a chastened, not bitter, regret that none of these gay, sun-lighted scenes of earth could be hers but a little longer. The disease that gripped her she knew was proceeding by leaps and bounds. It was sweeping onward like a fire across dry pine-lands. She was losing flesh. Her fever was increasing. Her cough was dryer. It was harsher.

She looked carefully at the well-known landmarks as she passed them, as if to imprint them upon her mind forever, so that she could not forget them. Grief at the knowledge of what her mother was, together with the inescapable disgrace for herself connected with it, had had the effect of lessening the hold upon life of her will. But along with the giving-up, there was the release from worry, from shame.

The mood of her sullen, rebellious mother who was sitting beside her, and who would neither speak nor reply when spoken to, did not disturb her. She saw it with the same diminishing emphasis of vision as a person floating in a balloon looks down upon any small, moving, human object which is out of voice-reach.

When, two days later, Alexander came, to their surprise he did not wear the usual military uniform. He was in the fashionable white piqué and fine French cambric of a country nobleman. The

only thing that kept in mind his official importance was the fact that couriers went day and night between Petersburg and the summer home.

Marie Antonova did not come downstairs any day until noon. Alexander arose at four in summer. He attended to his dispatches until breakfast. He and his daughter not only breakfasted, but passed the mornings alone together. These summer mornings by the Gulf of Finland were the happiest hours she had spent in her life. If her mother was all that was wrong and undesirable, her father more than compensated. He realized her ideals of beauty, of charm, of loving kindness, of gracious, beneficent presence. He was father and mother in one. He was like an ideal character keeping some of the old, unreal, perished charm of romance. She never tired of looking at him. Even in the palaces of Petersburg she had noticed how his presence dwarfed other men into crude inconspicuousness. Here alone with him, in these sweet mornings of summer by the sea, in the spacious, flower-filled gardens above which birds scattered their songs, gardens so rich, so lovely, so blossom-buried, that they dimmed man's dream of the valleys of Paradise; immaculate in white piqué, graceful, eloquent, with a great love shining in his eyes, she was startled to find that he reminded her of the Saviour of Man. It seemed to her day after day that it was the two figures blended in one that she walked with, and conversed with, amid the flowers, and the sunshine, and the song of birds.

Long ago, when she was just a little girl, he had reminded her of the noble white Greek marbles that she saw in the long shining palace corridors, on the days when he took her to visit the Empress. Then she knew that the change from that time to this had been persistent, although gradual. There had been a slow taking-away of one quality, and an equally slow adding of another. It was as if the soul of him had been slowly filtered of the petty basenesses, the inequalities, the hatreds, the shrewd but vulgar self-assertiveness that are of life. He was to her now like the pictures of that impressive, protecting, draped figure, which the priest who had prepared her for confirmation used to show her of the white-robed Christ meditating upon the hills of Pal-

estine, where grew the lily and the olive-tree, in the brief, bright days before the Betrayal.

When he bent over a flower he admired to show it to her, it was as if his presence blessed it. When they walked side by side, across the slightly yellow-green grass, to a remote corner of the garden, past the hill of the scented cedars, and came upon a hidden nest filled with tiny, speckled eggs, it seemed his smile swept them into life. The roots of the giant pines, upheaving angularly out of the earth, and the broad leaf surfaces above them, seemed to leap with the light of his love.

She watched the wild birds bend nearer to him their circling flight, as if under some magnetic control. Butterflies settled upon his hands. Seldom at his approach did the green, burnished humming-bird desert the tall, pink, swaying hollyhock.

When their happy morning wandering in the garden by the sea was over, she always felt a little pang in her heart, because it was he who remembered first, and mentioned the fact, that it was time to meet Marie Antonova for lunch and they must not keep her waiting. There was always the tiny pin-prick of grief that she alone did not suffice for him, that at an appointed hour his heart turned longingly toward her mother. Then they went to the long, brown, rustic settee, by the yellow roses, which were riotous and rich just now with the gold of the sun upon them, and there they awaited her, patient at any delay. She came directly toward them usually, from the front door, a little distance away. She was a seductive figure in blond lace or pink mull, moving along a pebbly walk, bordered on each side with round, large, bright-hued blossoms that splashed her skirt; or she passed pointed-topped evergreens, some of which had a shining, blue-white, unmeltable dew upon them, a magic, unheralded effect of summer beneath the Pole. Her silken, soft, black curls were light in the little breezes that touched them.

Alexander looked up at her always with the same delighted, happy eyes. But they met no response of any kind in hers. Her morning mood was regulated by how much or how little she happened to be satisfied at the moment with her personal appearance. She seldom ventured beyond the safe boundary line of self.

Usually, too, she was hungry, more than a little cross, and too impatient to greet either one of them. But her small harshnesses, her petty indifferences, disappeared in the great loving sea of his kindness like a pebble dropped into the deep. This was constant pain to his daughter, the being forced to observe the daily tragedy.

During the first week of their stay by the Gulf of Finland, Marie Antonova concealed her boredom, her ill-temper, as best she could. Every summer she told herself that she would not be punished like this another summer. She cared nothing for the blond, unfolded beauty of the sunny world of nature that surrounded her. She did not read except books of a type she would not dare have Alexander see. She had no interest in the extensive estate, the serfs who dwelled there, nor her daughter. She was not fond of boating nor exercise. She did not care for music nor any womanly pastime. She would not play outdoor games. She hated rustic amusements and what she called peasant mirth.

Family life was to her a terror to be escaped. And Alexander was a lover of such long standing she could not remember when she had not been tired of him. She would not have endured him all these years if it had not been for his great position, and the fact that he possessed the purse of Fortunatus. His position permitted her to lord it over other women. It protected her from men's scorn and evil tongues. And his wealth gave her what the merely moderate income of Dmitri Lvovitch could not give her. But even with this she felt that her security, her soft living, were purchased at too high a price. Each year, before the summer was over she told herself angrily that she would not put up with another one. In short, at her summer home there was nothing she wanted, while in Petersburg there was everything.

She had been torn from her new, impetuous, boyish lover, Schuvalow, whose youth delighted her, and whom she had not had long enough to become tired of. At the same time, against her will, she had been taken away from much-applauded, fascinating Lasky, whom at this moment she loved as much as she was capable of loving anything. Women were wild over Lasky. She was afraid of losing her precedence and power by being away.

All of which helped to make her more resentful, more rebellious. Petersburg, too, meant freedom. There she could do many things, and no one know it. It meant balls, *soirées*, gossip, flirtations, dressmakers, admiration, gambling, the diversions that were important to her. This family *solitude à trois*, in the country, made her unhappy. It was something she could not endure. The fact that she was forced to remain here made her hate Alexander.

Besides, Elizabeth the Empress had persisted in living on throughout the years, with what seemed to her unpardonable perversity. This kept her from marrying Alexander. This kept her from being Empress in name. She was growing careless with anger, with disappointment. The older she grew and the more danger she saw of the proud position that is vouchsafed to so few slipping through her fingers, the more it annoyed her. Alexander could not be influenced to set Elizabeth aside in her favor. There were a few things that not even she could sway him to do.

Sophie Narischkin was watching the growing restlessness of her mother with alarm. She had seen it before. She knew what it meant. She had become skillful by practice in forecasting the mental weather of her dissipated mother. Daily now she dreaded the noon hour to come, which meant her mother's regular reappearance, and her own nervous, sensitive watchfulness over her conversation, her manner. Daily she dreaded a dramatic explosion of some kind.

Alexander seemed neither to see nor sense anything of this, he was so deeply content in the presence of the woman he loved. She felt forced, at length, to speak to her mother in private, and to chide her for her unpleasant moods. In doing this she was surprised to find that the only means to appeal to her was by using base motives, because such motives alone could sway her.

"You know how greatly it pleases him to be here with you — alone. You might sacrifice, more willingly, it seems to me, your private interests when it is he who provides for you lavishly. Especially since it is a question of such a little while — just a little rest from care for him — In the end you return to Peters-

burg — and the things you enjoy. It is he who gives you your position, you must remember. *Everything* comes from him."

To her surprise her mother did not say anything in return. She did not show an inclination to quarrel. She could not at once, however, judge of the effect of her words. She did not contradict her nor seem disposed to be revengeful. During the next few days she refrained from saying anything particularly disagreeable, although she would not talk much, and she was noticeably silent.

Sophie soon became aware, however, that Marie Antonova was meditating profoundly. She was plotting something. Thoughts were passing and repassing behind her eyes like the great, shadowy, blurred forms of fish looked down upon in deep, green sea-water. She awaited with suppressed anxiety the result of this continued meditation.

She judged at length that the meditation was considered successful and favorable to her wishes, because Marie Antonova sat late quite willingly, one pallid, silvery, north-Russian night upon the lawn with Alexander. Her voice was soft and velvety as of old, and the sound of her little laugh had been happy, seductive. She could hear it plainly in her chamber above through whose broad windows the gentle wind came and brought the night sweetness of yellow roses.

The next day, at lunch, Marie Antonova declared she was getting fat. She knew she was losing her figure. She jested about it, however, and to her daughter appeared too good-natured for the fear to be genuine. She said she believed it was because she was not dancing nightly here as she did in Petersburg. She felt that she ought to make up for this lack of exercise *in some way*. Not only her appearance demanded it, but her health. To combat increasing flesh she decided she would ride. She had been told that it would restore the figure. She would be obliged to do something or have a new wardrobe made. Her dresses were growing so tight it was difficult to fasten them.

Her watchful daughter understood that she had found a way out, but Alexander did not, so he offered, generously, to ride with her. To this she demurred gently. She replied she planned to

ride fast; that that was the only way to reduce successfully, and it would not be good for him. He needed rest. He declared that that made no difference, that he would do anything to please her.

The plan had now expanded fully in her daughter's alert mind. She had learned how to read her mother. But Alexander was ignorant of it as usual.

"No," she answered gently, somewhat denyingly. "I will ride alone in the morning — while you and Sophie are taking your usual walk in the grounds. That will not take away any of the hours which you and I are accustomed to spend together. I will ride during the morning — the time when I usually sleep." This gentle consideration for other people, her daughter knew, meant the selfish and safe gratification of getting her own way.

"Very well, dear," Alexander replied. "As you wish — of course. I will select a groom, then, to accompany you."

Sophie knew that this displeased her mother, but that her mother did not dare say so. She wondered again that he did not understand. She knew also that Alexander's money would pay for that same groom to remain in hiding, in a perfectly safe place, until her mother was ready to reënter the grounds.

This plan was carried out for a few days. She returned promptly to lunch as she had promised. Then she not only did not return for lunch, but not until late in the afternoon. She had reasonable excuses each time to cover these changes, these delays. One day the horse got a stone in its foot and it took a long time to get it out. Then the horse limped. It seemed to suffer and she was forced to go slowly to spare it. She made a show of sympathy which her daughter saw through readily. Once she lost her way by turning off the main road. One day the heat made her faint, and she was obliged to sit in the shelter of some trees for a while. She did not dare to mount and start back until late when the heat had lessened. She regretted this. She was almost apologetic. Sophie knew that this meant fear or some hairbreadth escape from being caught. At length the hour of returning became so very late that they were forced to sit down to dinner alone without her. These dinners were sad and solemn. No one spoke. There was nothing safe to say. Alexander was either worried for

her safety or suspicious. His daughter was unable to tell which. She was worried, too. He had spent his afternoons in walking restlessly about the paths in front of the house that led to the gate and in looking expectantly up and down the road. Sophie was at her wits' end to know what to say. She had had all she could do to keep him from mounting and riding out in search of her. That would have been, she knew, the worst thing that could happen.

One night Marie Antonova came in too tired either to put in an appearance at dinner or afterward. Sophie felt sure that Alexander suspected something. He was meditative. His face wore a look she could not read. He forbade her going again. He was sterner than his daughter had ever seen him. She wondered futilely what it was of which he was thinking.

To the surprise of her daughter, Marie Antonova was neither rebellious nor angry. What could this mean? She settled back into the habit of getting up at noon with perfect good-humor. Sophie wondered what could possibly be back of this. Something must be, of course. Some new plot, and a subtler one. That it was not just what it seemed on the surface she felt certain. But for the little space it lasted she was grateful.

The correctness of her suspicion was proved three days later. It was a night when she had coughed a good deal and been restless. These daylight nights of summer were hard for her. A little before four o'clock she gave up the effort of sleeping, threw a padded robe about her for protection, and sat down by the window. Her apartment, as it happened, was along the front of the house, where it overlooked the broad highway that led whitely away toward Petersburg. Her mother's apartments and those of Alexander were on the other side of the house, with a view upon the water, and upon the woods beyond. She looked out quickly. She was just in time to see Marie Antonova, disheveled and frightened because she had been so long away, coming in on horseback. She was trying vainly to make the horse walk softly upon the edge of the turf so no one could hear him.

The cause of her late good-humor, her apparent indifference to Alexander's command, was clear. She had been going out occa-

sionally during the night, and then, to make up for it, sleeping half the day.

But how had she been able to conceal her night absence from Alexander? That she did not know nor have any means of finding out. But here she was! This proved it.

Sophie Narischkin stepped back quickly from the window, so that Marie Antonova would not know that she had seen her. She must have a groom or one of the house servants in her pay to help conceal her stolen exits, her daughter thought at once. "I wonder which one it can be!"

Sophie crept softly back to bed. She was determined to think up a plan to circumvent, without any apparent act of intervention, these night adventures of her mother; something that would put a stop to them effectively, before the truth was disclosed to Alexander, and to their summer neighbors along the highway.

To her surprise she hit upon a plan easily. It pleased her so she determined to tell Alexander at breakfast and beg him to put it into execution, before Marie Antonova could hear of it, or come downstairs. She would beg Alexander to send the saddle horses in the stables to a pasture by the sea which belonged to their estate, and where their sheep and cattle were. The ostensible excuse would be that making them stand upon a hard floor in summer was cruel, that it injured their hoofs, while the soft, damp sea-meadows would not only be a kindness to them, but would restore their feet. Their neighbors saw to things like this. Why should not they? And she would beg him to see to it that very morning before her mother got up to hear about it, or attempt to prevent it. This last she would think herself. She would not, of course, say it.

After he had met her in the morning room, kissed her, inquired how she had slept, and they had begun their breakfast together, she set about carrying out her plan. It pleased Alexander. It succeeded at once, just as she had expected it to do, because of its unforced reasonableness.

That day Marie Antonova did not come downstairs to lunch. Her first appearance was toward the late dinner hour, when she wore the air of happy-hearted restlessness her daughter knew so

well. Alexander was happy too. He thought this bright-eyed, loving buoyancy was for him. One of his radiant hours seemed to be rising. His daughter knew better. She knew that it was because she had a rendezvous that night, and that she was happy, not in contemplating her daughter and Alexander in the present, but in forgetting them, in making-believe to herself that they were not. Evidently one of the grooms sent to the meadows with the saddle horses had been the one who was in her pay, and she still knew nothing. With suspense Sophie Narischkin awaited the disclosure that must come.

Liqueur was served after dinner out of doors upon the lawn. Among the trees, the birds were beginning to sing their good-night songs, and spill their farewell sweetness upon the flowers. Frogs were calling. The blond, bright day of summer was dying.

As evening came on, Alexander was happy and talkative. He was telling Marie Antonova how he had missed her during the day. The tender words he uttered in that magic voice, so rich, so moving, fell upon her ears as unheeding as the bird songs upon the flowers. Then he recounted in detail what he had done to put in the time until she came downstairs to join him; how, first, in the morning after his dispatches had been attended to, it had occurred to him to give the saddle horses a little rest, a little freshening in the meadows. So he had sent them away. He did not happen to mention Sophie's name in connection with this, and she was glad. Luck was on her side evidently this time. She was careful not to look up so her mother could see intelligence shining in her eyes.

"Did you send them *all?*" she inquired a little hastily and with a change of tone her daughter noticed.

"Yes, dear, all. We do not need them since you are riding no longer, do we?"

Sophie held her breath. Alexander was not watching Marie Antonova's face at that moment, but her daughter was. She saw such a look of wild disappointment followed by savage hatred leap into her eyes that it terrified her. What depths of evil were within her! She felt that the old waves of anguished rebellion were sweeping over her, just as she had felt that night at the the-

ater when Lasky was playing and Alexander had come to take them home. She had guessed correctly. Marie Antonova had an appointment for to-night. There was no way to know with whom, of course. But one thing was certain, she could neither keep it nor send word. She had been outwitted. Now she was held fast in a net where struggling was useless. Sophie was both amused and glad. She did not dare look up. She hardly dared breathe. She sat perfectly motionless, her eyes fastened upon her shoes. She had outwitted her long-practiced, scheming mother who was in the habit of fooling them all.

Alexander continued pouring words of love and tenderness upon her unheeding ears, while she sat rigid, looking straight ahead, the unemptied liqueur glass arrested halfway to her lips, just where it was when the disclosure came.

Finally she managed to say dully, with little blunt, measured pauses between the words, as if each word were difficult to get over: "I find — I have a headache coming on. I think I will go to my room — and have my maid brush my hair."

"Do not desert me to-night, love!" he begged in a disappointed voice. "Fresh air will do you good. You have been indoors too much. I have waited all day for this."

She did not answer. Her daughter watched her face grow thin and strained, with the violence of suppressed emotion, suppressed anger.

"Let us walk awhile in the garden together. *See* — what a night it is for love! Let us be lovers again — as we were once long ago — *Marie! Marie!* — " Emotion and surprise rang in his voice.

She was halfway to the house now. She did not look back nor answer, nor say good-night. Sophie Narischkin realized that, try as she might, to-night she could not fill the place of Marie Antonova in the heart of Alexander. She alone did not build his happiness. She realized, too, afresh the hard, wicked nature of her mother, and the great love that had for so many years been wasted upon her.

The expression upon the face of Alexander made her suffer. His face wore that stern, white, rigid mask she had seen but once

before, but which she could not bear to look at. No word, however, of either complaint or criticism crossed his lips. But there was grief in the depths of his eyes.

In a few moments, after a servant had taken the liqueur glasses away, he offered his arm to her with the old, gentle grace, to which she was never insensible, and they strolled down the flower-bordered avenues together, toward the Gulf, which white mists were blotting now into sad similarity to that vast unknown men dread, which it seemed uncannily to her then that they two were both approaching.

He felt that she was suffering, and suffering for him, and his every word was expended in brave attempt to bring joy back to her.

CHAPTER XI

ODESSA

THE presence of Alexis Sergiewitch in Kishenev could not be concealed indefinitely from Count Woronzow, nor indeed the fact that he had written truthfully, even boastfully, in a verse that was new at this period, a description of his shameful life among the gypsies, and forwarded the manuscript to Petersburg to be printed. With "The Gypsies" he had also sent on to Petersburg another poem, "The Black Shawl," to which, in momentary enthusiasm or caprice, he signed his name, too, as author, because it had pleased him to remember the words. For the past year every courier who went North took along and then scattered over the country the resentful or the inspiring melody of his writing.

The official dignity, the conventional feelings, of Count Woronzow were outraged. It was useless, the old man thought, to try again to influence him by talk, by argument. He refused, therefore, to see him or to have any contact with him. But he issued an order for his imprisonment. After the imprisonment came the same round of futile meditations. He could not make him work. He had tried and failed. He could not keep him in prison permanently either. That would injure his health. His presence in Kishenev was becoming pernicious. It was leading to the forming of imitative bands of rebellious, admiring youths, who if they could string a few jingling words together thought they were poets and therefore had the right to do anything. What was to be done? He could not let it go on. He could not let his discipline be broken up. He had repeatedly written to Petersburg for advice. The replies had just as repeatedly left the decision to him. He decided at length that Pushkin must be removed from Kishenev. Since he could not go back to Petersburg, but remained, nominally under his supervision, he would send him to a new *milieu*, to Odessa. There he could place him in another office,

under his supervisor of accounts in that division of his government, who happened to be a man in whom he had confidence. He could not dissipate so madly there at first, because it would take time to make acquaintances.

And so just as Alexis Sergiewitch had set out from Petersburg without will of his own, and with a driver who was likewise his jailer, so he set out from Kishenev. But Count Woronzow was not so successful in selecting jailers as that arch-fiend, Count Benkendorf, in Petersburg. This was a merry, good-looking fellow, young like himself, and one who admired Pushkin greatly. He knew all about his dramatic adventures, too, in the *Kabak*, the Old Town, and down on the steppe, toward Ismail.

When he had left Petersburg at the sudden command of authority, it was with grief. Since that time he had been slowly acquiring a new sensation, a sort of pleasurable trust in the unknown, which he went gladly to meet. It had some of the allurement of a game of chance, only the stakes were greater. He was learning to enjoy the giving himself over to new influences.

And he was not now in his usual wild, emotional mood. After the period of creative exaltation in the little white house of the Turkish woman, on the long hill, where he had temporarily exhausted himself in writing, he was experiencing, as he usually did, a reaction which either took the form of indifference to things in general or a peculiar, ill-defined, nervous fear. And then the autumn frequently had a salutary effect upon him. It was the season when he was calmest and most reasonable, and did his best writing. With the feverish scarlet of the forest he, too, put away some of the wild impulses of his blood, and became quiet, tractable. And, too, he was acquiring a liking for travel, especially down here in the less inclement South where it was warm. He enjoyed promenading his eyes over the outlines of strange cities, new and unseen landscapes.

This was another world down here. It was unlike anything his limited experience had come in contact with, in the North. It was a pleasure to set out across the autumn land, with the clear, pale sky above him, which held no threat. Southern Russia in autumn caressed his senses. The pale, level distances pleased

him. The steppe even showed a variety of late flowers. There were sweet williams, canterbury bells, goldenrod in abundance, and the late-flowering sweet pea. White butterflies with marbled wings fluttered over the flowers. Blackbirds flew up like grasshoppers from the harvested fields. Sometimes caravans passed them which were drawn by camels; not the tiny, North-African variety, but huge, majestic Mongolian camels, looking, in the enveloping yellow dust of distance, like a realization of a vision of Apocalyptic beasts, monstrous, ungainly.

The levels were yellow. Amber scents came on the wind. There was something in the air, too, that was gentle, meditative, like repentance. In farmhouse gardens along the highway were striped melons, called *arbuses*, whose leaves the frost had killed, and tall poles covered with dying hop-vines which floated in the wind. There were purple grapes and russet pears. There were *kissel* plums and rich reaped fields of maize. Alexis Sergiewitch saw here, too, the result of Count Woronzow's work, in astonishing apples, some of which measured twenty-two inches around, and a wealth of opulent fruit. The nightingale which had sung to him of love, of passion, down upon the Ackermann Steppe toward Ismail during the nights of that magic summer, was gone now, gone to the warm sheltered valleys of the Caucasus. Less eloquent-throated songsters had taken its place.

Bender, the first place of consequence he came to, where the Dniester is narrow, but still deep and swift, recalled to him Prince Potemkin who had died here by the side of the road, just where he was traveling now, in the arms of his niece, Countess Branicksi. He observed Bender with interest.

Next came Tirospol, a place founded by German agriculturalists. He could see their pale, dull, patient faces in the fields about him, and the results of their diligence. Then after Tirospol the vast plain began to be visible, that spreads its pale, unmarked defense, like a desert, about Odessa on the land side; a yellow plain which the winds rule, and where they race violently, tumbling up huge clouds of dust; tremendous winds that pound and howl, sweeping all the way from remote Asia toward the lonely outpost of Russian civilization.

After interminable, weary hours across the yellow plain came white Odessa, and beyond — the Sea, which to him was the ocean he had never seen. He felt the joy of coming into view of the Black Sea after days of unenlivened levels. It was charmingly blue just when he first saw it, and enticing, with white, pointed sails upon it. It allured him. It beckoned him on.

The first, far glimpse of Odessa, the first Russian city where semi-modern methods of swift city-building had been demonstrated, is impressive. He felt it. He greeted it with gay exclamations. The building of Odessa brought about a marked division between the methods of construction of the mediæval and the modern world.

Alexis Sergiewitch was sensible to its impressiveness, even at this distance. It was the first city he had looked upon which was not in appearance a Russian city. He was charmed at once by the thought that its building was connected with a magic name, which had dominated his childish imagination just like *Napoleon;* a French name, too, the name of its early maker, *Richelieu the Duke*, which made him recall the merry, spirited tales he had heard of that other Richelieu, *Richelieu the Cardinal.*

Alexis Sergiewitch immediately set happily about making plans, with the young driver, to conceal their arrival, for a time at least, from Count Woronzow's staff of office men, so that they could amuse themselves in their own way. They would both be free for a few days, enjoy themselves in sight-seeing, and in putting up at some expensive French hostelry. Alexis Sergiewitch had a little money. They would use that until it was gone. Then he would borrow more upon his father's name, which was what other young men of his class were in the habit of doing. He was not going to let either duty or lack of money lessen his enjoyment when there was such an opportunity to do as he pleased.

Wide, pleasant, and very modern-looking they found the streets of Odessa. Here sea-winds sported. Here the gay Southern sun rejoiced the heart. The city was luxurious to the eye. It was spacious, well suited, in short, to be new in this land, which was new and vast. It had the cosmopolitanism, the broad

world-contacts, which characterize popular seaports. A breath of that modern, scientific era of commerce was already being felt here. It was a night city, too, just like Petersburg or Moscow.

In the streets of Odessa, which with his young friend, who was as reckless as he was, he now proceeded to explore, he found to his astonishment not Russia, but Europe and Asia amicably shaking hands. Here East met West. Their mingled costumes dominated the wide, windy streets; the ancient caftan and turban of Asia jostling the latest fashions of France. Women were wearing luxurious gowns upon the street down here in the warm South, gowns of silk, of piqué, of muslin, with velvet shoes upon whose toes were monograms of gold or of diamonds; costly Indian shawls, gold-embroidered cloaks of gay velvet, and hose of transparent French silk. And in the women who wore these clothes Alexis Sergiewitch saw a new beauty, the misty, the veiled eyes of the North, uniting with the voluptuousness and the richer freedom of the South.

Upon the street signs above his head various languages were written. And there were small open bazaars along the business thoroughfares just like those in Damascus or Stamboul. He explored them all in a sort of greedy haste. He longed to buy everything he saw displayed for sale, for sake, chiefly, of the emotion of buying.

He explored the long terrace which overlooks the sea — the terrace bordered on one side by palaces, sumptuous residences, and occasional monuments — which is imposing. At the base of this terrace spreads a large semicircle where on a sudden he found himself face to face with the hero of his dreaming childhood, Richelieu the Duke, in bronze, who had been one of the first to plan building a city by accurate, scientific methods. He paused to look intently at the slightly scornful but highly intelligent face of the great Frenchman who had amused himself, when forced to flee from the *Terreur*, by building a Russian city. Then he admired the mammoth staircase back of the statue, with its countless, uniform, shining steps leading to the terrace above, and the general atmosphere of sumptuousness and space, symbolizing as it were the limitless ambition of that subtle Latin face fixed in

bronze, that had flung upon the semi-savage, south-Russian shore, the ordered, the ennobling vision of those city-building, Mediterranean peoples. The newness of the city pleased him too. There were no marks here of a melancholy past.

He loitered gladly in the long, wide streets, which looked so pleasant to his boyish eyes, so alluring. Frequently these spacious streets were interrupted by squares. Sometimes they were bordered by acacia-trees. He was happy and free. He was interested in everything.

Best of all in Odessa he loved the wharf. Here he idled for hours. He never grew tired of it. It was in truth in these years a remarkable place, and at the height of its importance. There was no merchandise in existence that did not enter the free port of Odessa. It was one of the ultimate destinations for the caravans of the world: carpets from Persia; perfumes and shining brass, rainbow porcelains and massed exquisite colors from China; splashed muslins, precious carvings, and scents from India; jewels, silks, laces from France; Arab horses; French thoroughbreds; gold furniture; tropic fruits; bright-hued birds; English stoneware; Birmingham cottons. It was as rich in marvels, indeed, as the fabulous seaport of Tyre, which boasted ivory, apes, and peacocks, which Biblical kings admired and ancient writers chronicled.

Daily here, with an untamable, nervous, sensitive joy, he promenaded his delighted eyes over the piled-up treasures of the earth, displayed by the edge of this blue-black sea. Hours and hours he stood here happily watching the waves shake out merrily their little white ruffles of foam, and thinking how they had come all the way from that vast, that mysterious Asia he dreamed of and longed to see.

After his companion had started back for Kishenev, not daring to remain longer and sure of punishment as it was, he forgot about Count Woronzow, his Counting-House, and duty. He became merely a young aristocrat, a traveler, who idled and amused himself. In his eyes the greatness of novelty, of pleasure, more than justified the attitude.

One night at the French hostelry, where he happened to be

dining late, he was alone at the table with an Englishman of about his own age, who the next morning was taking ship for Marseilles on his homeward way to England. When he found out that Alexis Sergiewitch, his young Russian *vis-à-vis*, spoke not only French, but English in some degree, reading it perfectly, he asked if he would care to have two small books of verse, the work of two young poets of his land, by name Byron and Shelley, for which he had not been able to find room in his bags. The pale, young, un-Russian-looking Russian, not only accepted the gifts with alacrity, but he showed a restless haste to get hold of them.

For the next few days, while the Englishman was sailing calmly away toward Marseilles and thinking of England, Alexis Sergiewitch barely left his room except to eat. He could with difficulty find time to sleep, so greedily did he read.

Alexis Sergiewitch had never seen any such poetry as these two books contained. It was a revelation. It moved him more deeply than anything had ever moved him. Never had he dreamed of such poetry as this! Its beauty, its vigor, its daring, its wild, unrestrained, onrushing verbal sweep; its defiance, its thunderous assailing of God and man, its creative fire that burned away falsenesses, basenesses. It was the last, free, late flowering of the stormy, fight-loving Saxon's sea-robbing soul. It was the last outflung glowing splendor, in civilized man, of the Berserker's rage. It was one of the last expressions in literature of unmixed racial unity before the great amalgam came with its blending, its blurring. It was the last genuine expression of that which was England. The reading made him mad. It destroyed what little respect for order, for duty, remained to him. It made him arrogant. It made him more proud of his poet's calling.

This was not the first time in the history of letters that poetry had made men mad. History has recorded the fact in the case of two poets of an earlier day, Hafiz the Persian, and Anacreon. There was a time when the reading of the former was prohibited both by church and government, because it was declared *he made men mad.* Both Hafiz and Anacreon had flung at commonplace man a flashing, consuming fire that dazzled while it burned, just

as in these books Alexis Sergiewitch was reading. And in them both was the same old, unreasoned joy, the same battling defiance, the same disregard of duty, of obedience; in short, the unleashing of a dangerous power that teaches man he is a god and not a slave. And the pictured faces in the front of the two books enchanted him so: Shelley's, the delicately featured, high-bred face of another race; and the noble beauty of Byron which Lawrence never ceased to regret he did not paint. He could not look enough at them. He could not turn his eyes away.

The more he read, the more Alexis Sergiewitch saw in himself another Byron. He was pleased. He was flattered. He felt that he was abused, too, by the world just as Byron did. He sympathized eagerly with Byron's contempt for conventions. He had less in common with the brave, free soul of Shelley.

From Byron he took only the bad qualities, such as rebellion against law, against order, and not the great ones, which were love for his fellow-men and willing warfare for their freedom. He was too racially dissimilar to assimilate them as they were, because there were not only centuries but vast geographical spaces between them. With Alexis Sergiewitch democratic ideals were largely a pose; but he had the same wayward pride, the same desire to touch life supremely at as many points as possible. His emotions, however, were not so deep. They were not so sincere. And they were always changing. They were merely for the moment's amusement, rather than the substance of which life is made. But he was a subtler and a more delicate artist than either of them, even if he had less strength. He had more charm, if less vigor, and a lightness of touch which neither could approach.

Alexis Sergiewitch was something of a butterfly instead of an intellectual heavyweight. In his soul there was no grand passion for the freedom of mankind such as redeemed richly the wild deeds of Byron; there was no dream of the unselfish sacrificing of self for a world's ideals. But very likely no one has seen the artistry of the two Englishmen, the power, the beauty of their word-craft, as he saw it. And certainly no one ever drank in their untamable fire as he did that lonely winter of exile by the sea of the South.

How deeply would he have been moved if he could have known that Shelley of the unforgettable face had died in Italy the winter before, and strangely enough, that it should occur while he was writing "The Triumph of Life," a poem powerful, defiant, and somber. Byron, too, was not far removed in time from a death equally moving, equally dramatic.

From the Englishman's stories about Byron and Greece, Alexis Sergiewitch got the idea that they were both there, and a plan began to develop in his head to join them. "What a life," he kept saying to himself, "could we lead together! What could we not effect!" He saw already in fancy the form of his youthful self, outlined against the classic marbles of that lovely land. He painted eloquent dream-pictures with himself as hero, by the side of Byron. Then, overcome by the splendor of his vision, his own emotions, and the longing to get away, he wept. He wept, too, at thought of the Roman poet Ovid, once exiled here in southern Russia, just as he was exiled now. The golden-tongued heroes of the past dwelled with him spiritually. And he suffered deeply to think of his childhood's hero Napoleon, exiled upon an island where he had died. He felt a magic, sympathetic union with the great men of his age.

He wandered alone by the water, forging impossible, wild plans of getting to a Turkish ship, that would bear him south, out of Russia; *via* another Turkish ship he could make his way to Greece, and Byron. If he could only get away from Russia! If he could only free himself from its constraining laws!

But a Turkish war with Greece was threatening. The ships of that country were unsafe. They were out of the question. And there was no other way to leave Odessa without a passport.

Alone by the water, in the grave and violet evening, when the breath of the wind was suave, he declaimed the classic lines descriptive of Italy and Greece, of Byron and Shelley, until it seemed to him that he could hear coming across this sea their sweet, shrill, far flutes of song, coming across space as now they would be forced to come across time. That, in the early evening, is what the deep's voice was to him here, in the wind and in the dusk. It called to his poet's soul with the resistless lure of the

Greek lyrics. The old mad songs of Anacreon, of Sappho, rippled in his ears. He wandered here in the night, too, and the storm. When cold, white hail, like a dagger dance, dimpled the sea with dots and disguised its levels, he felt that he could glimpse the tottering, towering galleons of old, with their gorgeous prows, with their sweep of banked oars, coming for him.

When fact at length began to penetrate his longing dream, he wrote, forgetting in his enthusiasm the excellent resolution he had made in the white house in Kishenev, to look out upon the world and *do his own seeing*. He wrote of it in the manner of Byron.

CHAPTER XII

MADAM WORONZOW

After Alexis Sergiewitch had given vent in words to his first Byronic rage, he had written out his soul in song. After all his plans for escaping from Russia *via* a Turkish ship and joining Byron had failed, the old thirst for wine, for the caressing arms of women, love, which was seldom suppressed long at a time, came back. He made one of those supple, startling changes, which were so much a part of his nature and so necessary to him, and swung, mentally, toward something different.

Down here in the South of Russia, where her husband's word was law, Madam Woronzow queened it more royally than the wife of Alexander in Petersburg, because the Empress had no interest in queening it. Madam Woronzow was a beauty. She was *legère*, *superficielle*, *séduisante*. She was the daughter of Countess Branicksi, who was favorite niece of that great reveler, Prince Potemkin. Her father, according to Russian law and the service of the church, had been Commander-in-Chief of the armies of Poland. But who he really was *in fact* would have been difficult, indeed, to tell, so many lovers had the fair Countess had, especially when she lived in the gay, Oriental pavilions of Prince Potemkin, down on the Ackermann Steppe, near Ismail. Her father might have been the Prince de Ligne or the Duke of Nassau. And we recall, too, certain possible, merry, confirmatory proofs about Count Roger de Damas, the young French hero of the brutal siege of Ismail, which he wrote down in his diary on the spot. The futility of fact here is proved amply. Now to the lady herself.

Madam Woronzow was just as unlike that worthy and responsible person, the Count, her husband, as it is possible to be. He regarded her, it may be said, with the forgiving eyes with which the saint regards the earthly cross that paid for sainthood. If he included her in his nightly prayers, which is more than

probable, it was from habit and good-breeding, not because he hoped the prayers would prove effective over her.

Madam Woronzow had the gayly impertinent face of old France; spirited, a trifle *maline*, petulant, with saucy, uptilted nose. A bunch of curls frolicked high upon the back of her head. Her brown, merry eyes were full of twinkles, like water when the sun shines. Her mouth broke readily into smiles. She looked proudly down upon the mass of untitled plebeians beneath her with an arrogant Marie de Medici look. She was mistress of every high-handed prerogative of class, together with caprice, and various other more intimate personal addenda, some of which could not well be dwelt upon with profit. She was a singularly fine specimen of the woman of her type, a worthy pupil of those dissipated old *émigrés*, who had taught the Russians not only their polished, courtly speech, but their moral laxity, their *légèreté*.

Being the daughter of Countess Branicksi, the favorite niece, she had inherited a goodly part of the colossal fortune of Prince Potemkin, who had laid not only Russia but the East under tribute, and who once piled high his library shelves with diamonds instead of dusty books. With the money she had inherited, too, his princely nature, some of his caprices, and his tastes.

Late on Wednesday night, which was the night when Countess Woronzow received, Alexis Sergiewitch went proudly up the steps of her pale, slate-stone palace and sent in his name by one of her footmen. He was wearing new clothes to-night and a new style of cravat, both made just as closely to imitate those worn by the pictured Byron as possible, while his pale, scented curls were brushed back with a daring, an *abandon*, that reminded one of Shelley. He was in gay spirits to-night, too. He felt flattered by his English style and foreign appearance.

Accustomed as he was to the palaces of Petersburg, he was startled slightly at the outspread vista of salons that unfolded before his eyes as he entered. Height, space, splendor. The walls were hung with pale, pink-tinted silk velvet. Pink silk velvet, figured, covered the floor, a carpet that had been the gift of a Turkish prince and a trophy of Persian war. White crystal chan-

deliers hung at regular intervals from the ceiling. Along the walls were mirrors from Venice, as huge as doors, reaching to the floor, and each one was framed in cut, rose-hued, flashing crystal. The furniture was gold and pale-blue satin. And the woman who bowed to receive him, despite her diminutiveness, her exquisite baby-Venus type of body, had the regal air of a *grande dame* at the court of the *Grand Monarque*. She spoke the French of that period, too. She wore bright sea-green satin, covered with fluttering ruffles of the filmiest white silk lace, and she carried a painted fan.

Alexis Sergiewitch had come at an opportune time. Madam Woronzow was *ennuyée*. Winter in Russia was, to be sure, the *belle saison*. But not in Odessa. That referred to Petersburg, to Moscow, where she was not permitted to be. Her gay and companionable friends had gone North, therefore, to the court. The French and English had sailed south by the sea, so her great salons were not filled as usual to-night, and now the last comers were leaving.

She received Alexis Sergiewitch with cordiality. His name was familiar to her, and so were his escapades. They understood each other at a glance. They were alike; both children of pleasure who drank deep of the moment, regardless of cost. He kissed the little hand that looked like a doll's, and then, before he thought, he kissed the slender wrist. She looked up and laughed. Her little dimples twinkled.

"Is it really *Monsieur Pushkin*, or is it *Monsieur Byron?*"

She recognized his carefully copied attire. This pleased him. Then they both laughed together because they were young and careless.

"*Oh! Countess Woronzow* — I should not have come here to-night! I *forgot!*" — in a burst of confidence.

"Forgot *what?*" — eagerly scenting a secret.

"I was sent here, *Odessa* — ever so long ago, by *Monsieur le Comte* — to work in his offices. And I never reported —"

"What did you do?" She was visibly interested.

"I ran away and hid. Then I had a good time."

Madam Woronzow was delighted with the merry confession.

Nothing so interesting had happened for a long time. The wayward curls of her high chignon were dancing approval.

"What will become of me — *now*, if you tell!" There was genuine fear in his voice this time.

"Well — *serve me* — instead of *Monsieur le Comte*. It will be all in the family, will it not?" she replied, restraining again, with difficulty, her laughter at the humor of the situation. This was the way she liked life to be.

She was walking rapidly toward the rear of the great salons now, her green-and-white train dragging heavily behind her across the pink carpet, and showing the tiny gold slippers and gold lacework hose she wore. Then she turned abruptly, paused, wrapping herself up for the instant in its white flutter. "We will go into the little sitting-room, where we can chat. The drawing-rooms are too large for conversation, don't you think so? I will smoke. And there I will order wine for you."

The smaller room they entered was like a daytime dusk, being hung and furnished in pale violet satin. It was lighted by one huge, yellow, swinging lily, an Indian lotus made of Venetian glass. Upon little tables of satinwood, scattered here and there, were boxes of solid gold, of solid silver, which held sweetmeats, cigarettes, or powdered perfumes to inhale. She reached for the silken bell-rope and ordered champagne. She found then that she was thirsty, too. She drank the merry, sparkling liquid with him, drank it from a long-stemmed, scarlet, Bohemian glass, on the outside of which were gold knobs, each holding a turquoise. Alexis Sergiewitch saw about him here something of that material splendor of living which in the last days of Catherine the Great had been something enormous.

"It is a great bore to be forced to spend *la saison* in Odessa," she complained, settling herself comfortably upon a *paté*, a piece of furniture in vogue now, half sofa, half easy-chair, over the end of which her long, green, lace-flounced train billowed.

"*Monsieur le Comte*, you see, is building a new palace for me — in the Crimea. Occasionally, of course, I am obliged to run down by boat, and look it over. *No* — not so far! *Yes*, it is at Gursuf — near Alupka. The coast of Crimea, you know, is rapidly becoming an *Asiatic Riviera*.

"This place is getting shabby — don't you think so?" — glancing about with a little pouting air of disapproval. "The one he is building is an Oriental marvel!" She clasped her little hands excitedly, whereon great gems sparkled. "It is just such a piece of architecture, Monsieur Pushkin, as the Venetians attempted to build in India — *long ago* — for the Grand Moguls. When it is completed it will rival the Alhambra. It will be a realized dream of Haroun el Raschid!" declared the spoiled beauty, whose colossal wealth had left no limits in life for her. "I am tired *of this*." She put her wineglass down, and held out a long, slender cigarette until it touched the red flame-tongue of a bronze-green Japanese dragon. Then she settled back comfortably to smoke, to gossip, and to enjoy herself.

"Oh! Count Michael is making things merry for *you* — my young friend!"

"You mean his reports?" he questioned somewhat quickly.

"I should say so! Both Arakcheiev and Photius are *furious*."

He did not need to be told how they hated him. "And the Emperor?" he inquired with an interest he tried to conceal.

"*No one* — you know — ever really *knows* just what *he* thinks — he is buttoned up so tight *on the inside*." Here she paused and looked at him with her merry eyes in which laughter slumbered. "Count Michael, you know, is the best man in the world — *but* — he takes things seriously. That is a mistake. Don't you think so?" She did not wait for a reply.

"Photius is feather-white, *like the Terek* — in spring. You see — Count Galitzin in Moscow has gone over to the Catholics — the Jesuits? Had n't you heard of it? *You had not!* Now Photius demands that all the Catholics be driven out of Russia," the indiscreet tongue continued. "*Think of that! Foolish!* Don't you think so?" — blowing carefully a smoke-ring and watching it drift away. "Sometimes I say French Catholic prayers — and sometimes Russian Orthodox prayers. But it comes out the same in the end. A prayer is a prayer, whether it is French or Russian. Don't you say so? I knew you would agree with me.

"*Fancy!* He has made Alexander put Shishkov in Count

Galitzin's place as Minister of Education. And just because of a *prayer!* I don't know of any one who has a worse time of it than Alexander. I would rather be Countess Woronzow than Emperor Alexander."

"And I would rather you would — if it is here I am permitted to be," he reciprocated warmly.

Alexis Sergiewitch did not care at this moment what they were saying of him in Petersburg. That was far away, the champagne was ample — and fine, not to mention the merry face of youth that was leaning so amiably toward him.

"Have you heard the latest about Marie Antonova? *You have n't?* Is it possible! She deceives Alexander — *right along* —" Here she hesitated and looked at him appraisingly. "Lean over here! And *don't* look at me and then I'll whisper it to you."

He obeyed. His pale curls touched her red, alluring lips. Laughing, and all but setting his curls on fire with her careless cigarette, she whispered in his ear the latest amorous escapade of the mistress of the Tsar. "Would you *believe* it? Is n't it *amazing!* And — *he's* — to be her own *son-in-law.*" Then they laughed aloud together like the two merry children they were.

"But Alexander is changing," she declared in a tone of finality. "My friends write I would n't know him. He is growing melancholy. He is afraid of Europe — *books* — *new ideas.* And they say he is *so sensitive* — even fancies his lackeys make fun of him behind his back, when they hand him his coat — his hat — *Fancy!* Serves him right, too. He has never had eyes for any one but Marie Antonova. I don't think she is so *very* good-looking — *do you?* I thought you'd say so! If a man changes his gloves — should he not — *also* —" Again she bent her curly head and whispered gayly, naughtily, in his ear. This time he brushed slightly with his lips, his cheek, the white arm. Then he finished the bottle of champagne.

"Oh! so many things have happened in Peter!" she exclaimed in a tone that expressed regret that she had not been there. Then she added with a touch of that shrewd *aperçu* that distinguishes French women and surprises one into admiration in the midst of folly:

"You know, I believe we live more in *two* years here in Russia than in *ten* years elsewhere. What do you think?"

She folded her painted fan quickly, placed it upon the table and lighted another cigarette, stretching out luxuriously beneath the rich light the soft whiteness of her arms.

"Did you hear about young Prince Odojewsky? You did not? *Poor boy!* His mother is dead. He is literally grieving himself to death. Young Mouravieff-Apostol is one of your friends, *is n't he? I thought so!* Well — he brought a pretty, blond girl up from one of his estates. *Yes* — to Peter! I don't know exactly — it's *political* — but *anyway* she was reported, and sent to Arakcheiev's estate — near Smolensk — and *there* — Anastasia had her knouted to death. I thought it would shock you. The knout cut the end of her little white nose *right off.*"

Alexis Sergiewitch shook off the wine. The picture flashed to his brain. He suffered. He recalled the sensitive, almost girlish mouth of young Mouravieff-Apostol, and how it used to tremble if anything unpleasant affected him.

"Now the secret societies — I guess *they* are political, too, *some of them*, are n't they? — are raging — *for revenge.* I don't believe much in Pestel's sincerity, *do you?*"

Alexis Sergiewitch did not hear. His mind was far away with the pretty, childish, blond mistress of young Mouravieff-Apostol.

"The only reason *he's* against the government is because he's mad — because his father was dismissed from office. But that handsome *Ryleiev — he's* in earnest!"

The heart of Alexis Sergiewitch was bleeding and he did not listen.

Countess Woronzow looked down upon such affairs from the impersonal height of one who cannot accept even criticism because placed in life so securely. "The Grand Duke Constantine" — her unwise tongue went rattling on. "You know how stupid *he* is? Well, he said something *witty* — the other day. The Countess de Laval wrote me. You know her! He said: *Preserve me, O God! from death by fire or water — or from marriage with a German princess!*" She laughed immoderately at this. Her

white throat rippled like a canary's in song. "You know *they* all have *square* ankles — and wrists — *just* like peasants."

Her gold shoes twinkled softly in the dim light. Alexis Sergiewitch looked down upon them. He adored beautiful feet. Impulsively he bent his blond head and ran his lips along her gold-clad ankles. Madam Woronzow was enchanted. She sat very still, smiling, and watched him. She knew that she had the prettiest feet in Russia.

"It's a long time since you heard the gossip of Peter, is n't it? I thought so! Baratinsky is still deeply in love with the Emperor's daughter. Why in the world did n't Alexander give her to him?"

Alexis Sergiewitch wondered why, too. This was not news to him.

"I have been told that that mad monk, Photius, is *demanding your death, or permanent exile, from* Alexander."

Again, through the fumes of wine that confused him, a little needle of pain entered his heart, and he suffered. Countess Woronzow was just like a bird. Words, futile or deadly, dropped from her dimpled lips with the cruel inconsequentiality of song from a golden canary. She, however, was observing with a sort of zest this abnormal sensitiveness of his. She enjoyed it. It was something so unusual to watch.

"Very *good people* would be all right, if they could just let other people alone. But you see, they never have any *affairs — of their own.* I should n't be surprised if that were the reason. *Should you?*"

He nodded his head without hearing.

"Have you heard about the beautiful Oriental, *Persian, I think*, with whom Prince Metternich is in love? You *have n't? Not a word?* How is that! She is one of his spies. I should n't be a bit surprised if — *sometime* — she came to Russia. Should you? Every one of consequence, does — *sometime.* Don't you think so?

"In Vienna — *this came straight from Count Fiquelmont in Peter — in Vienna,* he has a room walled in pale-gray velvet; a room *no one* enters but himself. And in that room there is only

one object. *Guess what it is!* You can't? A life-size copy of Cupid and Psyche, a copy made by Canova himself. And there, beside it, beside this naked, beautiful woman in marble, he dreams of the woman of flesh whom he loves. Is n't that a splendid thing to do? *What do you think of that!*

"I have never met Prince Metternich!" she added a little pensively. She became meditative now. She puffed on at her cigarette without talking, as if gathering together carefully, or else shaping to suit her caprice of the moment, some impression which interested her. "Sometimes I have thought — that you — and Prince Metternich and Alexander might be called *the poetic triumvirate.*"

This unexpected shrewdness of perception aroused him. He began to listen.

"Why?" he inquired a little hastily.

"Well — you are a little poet — with *words* — of roses — and the wine. Alexander is a divine poet dreaming of universal peace — the rebirth of humanity; but Prince Metternich — is a sort of *sane poet* — a poet in his daily living —"

He did not wait for her to finish. The wine was working its will with him now. He was longing, too, to drown the suffering which her careless tongue had caused.

"That is what I am going to be, and now!" His face showed a sort of white and tragic fire, which for the moment dominated her, and which she liked. Decidedly she was having a good time. The boy was interesting.

With this he slipped over to her silken seat and took a place behind her. He bent impulsively his fresh lips of youth to her smooth satin shoulders. She was pleased. She laughed just as a child laughs with a new toy, but she did not repel him.

Love was something he did not experience. He was lonely in some sad, indefinable way. He wanted to shut out effectively for a while his mental vision of the world's cruelty. He must have warmth just as people suffering with physical cold seek heat. The beauty of the room, the late hour, the wine, the sumptuous surroundings, the sense-disturbing presence of the woman herself, called to the artist in him. He loved only the beautifully

gowned *body* of the woman beside him, the highly evolved art of dress which was hers, developed in Paris; her wit, her social finish, her royal gems, her immoral frivolity, her unbridled license of speech, her aristocratic hauteur, her cultivated taste for pleasure, and the fact that she looked upon life, and its enjoyments just as he did — but *the woman herself* he had no thought of loving. He did not even trouble to see *her*. That was something so altogether different that it did not darken the edge of his thinking. She merely flattered his senses after long abstinence. But was not that enough? Why should one demand that every daisy become a rose? They were young. They were careless and gay. They both belonged, by nature and training, to that powerful, pagan, unrestrained, free eighteenth century that was passing, and the present was theirs.

"*Sunday night*" — unclasping forcibly his detaining arms, arising, sweeping out with a quick motion of little gold feet, the long, fluttering, lace-flounced train, and opening and closing her painted fan — "*Sunday night* — you will dine with me. Are you not now in my service — *for punishment* — because you ran away and hid from *Monsieur le Comte?*"

Her little laugh rang merrily again. She was happy. He was such a charming boy to play with. And he was so astonishingly sensitive! "And Sunday night — I am going to give you a little gift. Perhaps it is what you call *pay* for service — just as if you were working in the Counting-House. Will not that be fun, *to play? No* — I will not tell you now what it is! It's a secret! *No — I will not! To tell* — would spoil the pleasure."

Again she was the proud mistress of the rose-hued salon, bowing out a guest.

"Until Sunday night, *Monsieur Pushkin, adieu.*"

He bent over her hand. "You may be sure, *Madame la Comtesse*, that *this time* — I shall not run away."

He hailed the arrival of Sunday with delight, not because of love for Countess Woronzow, but because in the meantime imaginative terrors had been tugging at his mind. The imagination he was not using just now in art was turned inward destructively

upon himself. "*That mad monk Photius is demanding your death of Alexander.*" These words repeated themselves in his mind by some independent volition of their own. It was not the definite thought of death, but the words gave life to a huge, tragic, phantasmagoria of fear, something that frequently fell upon him like a monster and devoured him, after prolonged periods of writing or imaginative strain.

But the childish, blond mistress of his friend, young Mouravieff-Apostol, he had known and liked. He saw with his brain the little cut-off white nose. It made him suffer. He longed for relief from the futile torture of his undisciplined thinking.

Countess Woronzow had ordered after-dinner coffee and liqueur served in her boudoir, giving way to one of her caprices, which were many. He followed happily the large half-moon of curving garnets that held the curls on the top of her head, and that matched her dress, into the cold, white, satin-shining frostiness of the painted room, where Cupids along the walls were blowing blue roses from puffed cheeks, or weaving lassoes of pale ribbon the hue of sentimental ashes of roses. She heeded not at all, conversationally, the grave dignitary who poured coffee, and then offered them diminutive crystals filled with a liqueur yellow, fine, sparkling.

"Can you guess what the gift is?" she inquired at once.

He shook his head.

"Have you not thought of it?"

"Of course! I have thought of nothing else," he fabricated glibly.

"It is just the color of me — to-night. Now can't you guess?"

Again he shook his head.

"How can you be so stupid? Pull the curtains when you take out the coffee," she commanded the expressionless-faced individual. Straight folds of white satin to match the windows fell over the door giving upon her private sitting-room without, and with it fell solitude on them, and the lure of youth, and love.

"How stupid you are! *See!* Did n't I say it was the color of me?" She held out a large, inscribed cornelian stone set in a ring.

He looked at it with sparkling eyes. It was, indeed, a charming gift and one worthy of the giver. "What does it say upon it, Countess Woronzow?" taking the ring delightedly and fitting it upon his finger.

"It is in Hebrew, the inscription. It says: *Simha, son of the most holy Rabbi Joseph. Blessed be his name.* The ring has magic power. It will protect you from evil. Wear it always for me."

"Wait a minute! Wait a minute! Let me repay you," he called in a voice which emotion was swaying. He walked across to one of the white-curtained windows, where he stood in meditation for a little while. Then, turning swiftly, his head flung back, a rapt, eloquent look within his eyes, he walked toward her, with inspired face and gesture and began to improvise.

Where the sea with ceaseless wave beat
Lonely shore flecks white with foam,
Where the moonlight glows all golden
From a southern heaven's dome,
Where in wanton harem-pleasures
Revels oft the Mussulman,
An enchantress twixt her kisses
Gave to me this Talisman.

Set thy heart not upon treasures,
'T will not aid a miser's greed,
Nor the favors of the Prophet
To a worldly end e'er lead;
If thy soul is filled with longing
For kindred at dark or dawn,
To the North it may not bear thee
Back again, my Talisman.

But when in the hour of midnight
Lustful eyes shall lure like morn,
When false lips that do not love thee
Kiss in pity or in scorn;
From love's sin and deep repentance,
From the sway of passions strong,
From betrayal and love's heartache,
Will guard thee, my Talisman![1]

[1] Translated from the Russian by the author.

As he finished reciting the last line, his fresh voice ringing with passion, and just as he was approaching her to bend down and put his emotional young arms about her, to repay her in his way for the gift, the white satin door-covering was flung back with an air of authority. In the door stood Count Woronzow, and behind him, an orderly.

The Countess arose, bowed gracefully, and exclaimed:

"*Monsieur, mon mari*, I welcome you! I cannot tell you how lonesome I have been, nor how sadly I have longed for your presence."

The orderly meantime had signaled to Alexis Sergiewitch, who, as he passed the Countess, saw her jewel-crowned head inclining for a second in graceful dismissal of him. Count Woronzow came in.

Alexis Sergiewitch glanced back. He saw a little white hand behind the Count's coat fluttering him a merry if brief farewell. The face of the Countess showed no trace of surprise or discomfiture. She was receiving the Count with the dignity that befitted his rank. Her eyes were merry, happy. It had been a charming little comedy. And she had played her part so well! She was proud of herself. In addition, it had ended at the right moment. A lover might become insistent or wearisome, especially when he is so young. Not always could one be rid of one at the psychological moment when emotion reaches its height, and have something so pleasantly dramatic — one might almost say *romantic* — to remember. She had enjoyed herself hugely while it lasted. He was so tremulously sensitive, so full of fire. Now she approved of herself. How much more satisfactory to play *real* comedies, *in life*, and be yourself the heroine, than to play them for *other people* — upon a stage! And then no one had written a poem to her. So this time there had been something new.

Late that night, in a little bare room which belonged to Count Woronzow, a room which did not look like the other rooms of the palace, where he kept a picture of his mother, an old Russian Bible, a battered icon of brass that had belonged to his grandfather, and a few sacred books, Count Woronzow wrote a solemn

letter to Alexander in Petersburg, the last paragraph of which was as follows:

It would be well to take Pushkin quickly away from Odessa, from this enthusiastic and applauding *milieu*, who are all trying to make him believe that he is a great writer, while in reality he is only a feeble imitator, of an original very little worthy any one's praise — Lord Byron.

CHAPTER XIII

METTERNICH

Prince Metternich was walking happily in the marble hall of that luxurious château, situated at no great distance from Verona, on Lake Garda, which had been lent him by one of his royal friends, and which bore in the neighborhood various suggestive or romantic nicknames, such as "Cupid's Nest," "Love's Bower," because it had been the dramatic, elegant setting for the *liaisons* of men of his class. Over its parapets, through its long, graceful windows, the faces of lovely women had looked. The oval-topped mirrors of its halls, its drawing-rooms, had reflected women renowned at that period. Only imperial beauties came here or women of princely blood.

He was awaiting in the spacious hall, with its rich, time-yellowed seats and statues of marble, eloquent of the great past of Rome, Châli the Persian, whom in her tender, formative youth he had taken and trained to be a super-spy; who in various Continental cities had performed creditably his bidding, and whom he had summoned from Algiers to meet him here.

Any approach to Verona made Prince Metternich high-hearted and happy. It was a place of glorious memory. Here, in 1822, he had won triumphs over the best diplomatists in Europe. Here, for a proud moment, he had been master of the world. Here he had succeeded in making the nations believe that the stability of the Hapsburgs meant the stability of Europe. He knew the technique of diplomacy as few knew it. He loved it as an art. And he loved it for its own sake.

He recapitulated the events of that year with an equal mingling of pleasure, of pride. He had conceived the idea of the Congress of Verona, the forming of a league of rulers against the ruled, and it was he who summoned the representatives of other nations to come. Alexander of Russia, when he reached Verona, because of his share in the recent, triumphant overthrow of Na-

poleon, and his avowed intention to become the savior of the Continent, was the foremost figure in Europe. When the Congress was over, Alexander had fallen. He was not the great, the dominating figure of his début in Verona, but instead, he, Prince Clement Metternich, had taken his place. He had there forced Alexander to join his policy. In doing it, he had made him break his pledged word to the Liberal party. The result was that he stood convicted, before Europe, of double-dealing. This was the master stroke of Metternich.

"I would rather be the one who rules a king than the king," he was reflecting proudly, as he paced the luxurious hall. "It is just as glorious — and a good deal safer," he added with a chuckle.

At that Congress, just as Alexander, when a vote was being taken, had responded confidently: *I answer for Russia!* he, Metternich, disclosed the fact that Alexander's favorite regiment was in revolt, that it had killed its colonel, and that there was rioting in the streets of Petersburg. This was his second master stroke. It weakened the power of Alexander. It surprised him. It grieved him. Like magic it reversed the relative positions of power of the two men. Then he, Metternich, became the bulwark of Europe. He, Metternich, became a super-king, throned above the others. But that was of the past. The time between had been unpleasantly productive of change. Now, somewhat figuratively speaking, perhaps, and yet with basic truth, a world stood in arms, powerful, revengeful.

"*Ah — Châli!*" There was unconcealed pleasure in the voice that called her name, as he heard steps upon the stairs and turned to meet her. It was in truth a picture calculated to win the approval of the sensuous, luxurious Metternich, that connoisseur of women.

Down the white, gleaming stairs of marble swept, with the alluring ease that distinguishes the Asiatic, a tall, slender woman wearing a gown of trained, flame-hued gauze which left her arms and shoulders bare. It was gripped tightly at the waist. But the skirt was draped and dragged its reverberating reflection along the floor. It was as if the room had suddenly burst into bloom.

The black hair upon the small, round head was parted in the middle, combed smoothly back and coiled upon her neck. Not a lock broke the outline. It resembled a hood of ebony. She had the broad, low brow, the short, straight nose of antique races. The eyes, however, were brown, transparent, wide-set, with a mingled expression of nobility and intelligence. She wore no jewels, no ornaments, but she carried a fan of ostrich feathers, the color of pale, green jade.

He moved quickly to meet her. He took her two hands in his. He drew her toward him emotionally, longingly, touching with his lips fondly, first one shoulder and then the other. His eyes expressed the pleasure he found in her presence.

"*Ah! Châli* — the suns of Algiers have colored you richly! You are the hue of that precious ivory which has been the pride of kings." Then he added a little sadly, so evocative was her presence, as if momentarily grieved by some luxurious thought: "You bring to me the South I have always loved. Despite the power, the prestige which life has lent me, I have regretted it has been a necessity it be spent in the North. It is a good deal to miss — the caress of blue water, flowers — and that luxury of light."

A servant entered. He proceeded to set flames upon the many tiny, tall, white glistening candles in the gold and marble sconces along the walls. The quick meeting of candlelight with the not yet perished day transformed the long windows that gave upon the lake, and the double entrance doors that opened upon the curving front portico, into huge, translucent gems of aqua-marine and melted sapphire, forming recurring backgrounds of wonderful blue, while the gauze flame of the gown of Châli shone deeply in the heart of tall mirrors, which alternated with doors and windows like the dusk of mysterious water.

Prince Metternich was a worthy companion to stand beside her, as they turned toward the dining-room where dinner had been announced. He was tall, handsome, blond, with amber curls brushed loosely back, a noble figure that had known how to keep the grace of centuries. He had blue eyes, merry, kindly; a sensual mouth, but the royal presence, the dignity of a king. He

had been painted by Lawrence and by Gerard, and in those eloquent portraits of the last of the great aristocrats, there is something compelling, some fine, unanswerable argument for the past and its arrogance, to make men forgive it, and long for it again. He was about fifty years old now, but he looked younger, so slender was his body, youthful.

To-night he wore, save for the powdered hair, a suit resembling the court costume of France; black satin coat, tight trousers of the same material, long silk hose, lace falling profusely over his hands, and buckled shoes. Love and unbridled desire for the seductive woman moving so supplely beside him, were surging in his heart as they walked along. This helped to increase the youthful glamour of his appearance.

Upon the two ends of the table which awaited them flowers cut from their stems were loosely piled after the Roman manner: blue lilies on one end of the table, pink, late, single-leaved roses upon the other. Slender glasses, slender decanters, of carved or etched crystal, poised white, cold, clear as aspiring thoughts, upon the thick, lustrous linen. Here to-night for Prince Metternich some of the elements of happiness were brought together and commingled: love, intrigue, and a pretty woman.

As he observed critically the arresting head, rising with such distinction above the gown of unfigured gauze, and the flowers across the table, it occurred to him, and the thought pleased him, that upon the highways of the dead and perished East, those ancient highways that had led to Sidon — to Babylon and Tyre — there had been women who looked like her. Beauty in women inspired in him an increased richness of phrase, and widened certain boundaries of thought. This was one of the pleasures they procured for him. Like wine, like pictures, they heightened the energy of life.

Like the egotist that he was, he could not enjoy anything that was not in a way his own creation. He was a collector of beautiful and rare objects, just as his friend Talleyrand was a collector of prints. Châli was one of the lovely human objects which he had collected.

About ten years ago, when she was little more than a child,

although a girl widow, one of his companions, for the moment in Greece, Count Esterhazy, to be exact, had come upon her, told Prince Metternich of her, and brought them together. At once he had seen, not only her beauty, but the clear, poised mind of her race, which promised usefulness to him. He had begun to employ women spies, such as Princess Bagration, who had been one of his first ones, and who still continued to annoy him with a passion of which he had grown weary.

He had taken her first, escaping briefly and gladly from the mist and cold of a Viennese winter, to the Azure Coast, the world's playground; so sunlight and flowers had been symbols of her, together with pleasure and delighted escape from work, from duty. There had been brief meetings at other seasons; in emerald-green valleys set high amid the white snows of the Alps; and once among the gayly peopled boulevards and the lights of Paris. In all places tutelage along the lines of service for him had been joined with pleasure.

Just as Prince Metternich liked to collect gems of art, just so he liked to collect human gems, *women*. But the human gems aroused in him a finer range of feelings, not only personal pride, the titillation of pleasure, but satisfied vanity, because frequently, as in the case of Châli, he had been instrumental in their perfecting. In short, he saw in them the handiwork of himself as creator. Not only had her body belonged to him, but her mind bore the imprint of his training and his pet ideas. She had reported to him conditions of life, socially, economically, politically, in various countries. She had employed the charm, the power of her personal self to sway individuals to his demands. For the past few years she had been in Algiers, keeping him informed of the progress, the plans of that race he so hated, the English, and chronicling the increasingly unstable footing there of France. Her religion, her unmistakably Oriental origin, had been peculiarly effective for him there, with Moslems of high position. In Algiers she had procured information that was important.

Because of this Châli had been surprised by the sudden, the unexpected removal from a place of such pregnant activity, and the summons to join him here as speedily as possible. She knew

something out of the ordinary was at stake. She knew something up to now concealed must be the mainspring of the summons. Although she understood his admiration, his enjoyment of herself, her poised mind, trained to read facts without a foolish admixture of flattery, told her that desire for herself was not the reason. The pleasure he found in her, she believed, was merely one of the more or less inconsequential pleasures he was in the habit of finding by his path of life. His cultivated selfishness had not escaped her.

Châli belonged to a type of women who attained peculiar perfection for a brief period in these fleeting, transition years which marked the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the so-called *modern age*, but who did not persist until to-day. A woman of brains, of beauty, trained not by fond, loving, flattering parents and friends, or foolishly indulgent husband and relatives, but by brilliant, impersonal men of the great world for posts of efficiency, and associating almost never with other women except punctiliously, upon purely perfunctory grounds of etiquette, in the political salon, the legation, the public place. A sort of woman who replaced, temporarily, perhaps, in the early difficult transition years of the young nineteenth century, a little of what the highly educated *hetairæ* had been to man's social life in pagan Greece. Such women had come oftenest from the Levant. They had played an important part in history; in the Mediterranean lands; in southern Russia in particular; in France, in Italy; women trained to silence, to observation, to the dominance of self, to the folly of unwise speaking, and to become at length splendidly poised, eloquent figures in the changing pageant.

Metternich was pouring, with evident enjoyment, golden Chartreuse into a sensitive, long-stemmed glass that shivered at the touch, and remarking *à propos* of his thoughts and his happiness: "I have always loved flowers, music, *and beautiful women.*"

"But why, Your Excellency, do you mention women last?" — taking the proffered wine gravely.

"Because to my mind they unite the charm, the sweetness of the other two. It is merely my way, you see, of adding the sum" — lifting his glass toward her significantly, and drinking.

Her deep-set, unsmiling eyes met his across the wine.

"How old are you now — my Châli?" — his words veering swiftly with his thoughts, and taking on a tone of tenderness.

"Almost twenty-five, Your Excellency."

"Ah! could it have been so long ago, those years of love and youth of ours — in the South of France — on the *Côte d'Azur!* O! that I could live them over again!" he exclaimed, surrendering himself to a maelstrom of memory in which love played the predominant part. He smacked his lips slightly, either because of the sweetness, the enjoyment of wine, or of memory.

"Then you are not so far from the age of the year — just half my age. Your feet stand upon the edge of the eighteenth century — a time when all women knew how to love," he added, with mingled conviction and regret, because he felt that pleasure-free period was withdrawing.

"They have never forgotten, in the East, Your Excellency." The glance that answered this was a caress.

No one could be more charming than the great Metternich in his hours of self-indulgence. Now he was giving free reign to his inclinations, to the natural man within him which politics suppressed. Unusual attractiveness and affability were his; his mind was flexible and pleasure-loving. It was rich with learning too, and his companions had been the leaders of his day. With no one, perhaps, did he so perfectly put away the crafty political tricksman as with Châli, because few women had so met the approval of both his heart and his head.

"Life has dealt me many blows," he continued, but not sadly. "It is only love that has preserved for me my vigor. I believe that I am a greater man in that the slavery of the scholar, and the burdensome detail of a diplomatic life, have not destroyed in me my love for pretty women. It is love that has helped to keep me mentally flexible —"

And Châli knew, as she listened, that the secret of a pretty woman, when she succeeds, is silence and not words; the evocative silence that inspires the man beside her. She knew that her influence with Metternich was the result of the fact that she was the *point de départ* for his more effective thinking, the thinking

that suddenly discovers new ideas, and which increased his satisfaction with himself. Into his difficult diplomatic profession Prince Metternich put bitter reality, cold reasoning, determination. He used no fantasy there. Into his living he put dreams, conversation, music, pleasure, cultivation of all kinds, idealism, *love*. In short, he made *life* his work of art.

Some such thought as this was passing rapidly through her mind, but she gave no sign of it. The meeting of men of power had made her able to appreciate the unusual range of his nature.

"I have brought to Your Excellency the flowers for which you wrote," the low-toned, even voice that melted so easily into the brooding blue of the night was saying.

"What flowers?"

"Flowers of Africa, Your Excellency. Those strange flowers that live upon air which you have been eager to see."

His face showed delight as his memory swung back to the forgotten request.

"*Orchideæ! Oh!* — I remember —"

"And such as no one in Europe has seen. I can assure you that in this, too, you shall be first." He was listening with interest, with pleasure. "I have had them collected from jungles, from well-nigh inaccessible mountain-tops — from tall trees. Some look like phosphorescent moons. From the center of others long, satiny ribands depend. In the dusk they are white, waving arms. They are like the call of a woman who loves. Some with mouths wide open and red. Some with dots like wild, white eyes that may not sleep. Some frail, sweet, evanescent, as gray butterflies in the day."

His face expressed pleasure. Besides, he loved extravagances. He had an inclination, inherited from his father, to squander money. The collector's zeal for a moment awoke, as he thought of those fabulous flowers of which he had only heard.

"I will hang them upon the walls of my study in Vienna. Next winter, when they bloom, I will think of Africa — and you."

"And I did not forget the music. When my boxes are unpacked, I will play for you upon my violin some of that disconcerting, wild music."

This interested him again. He was a musician. He could improvise at will. He could reproduce upon the spinet whatever he heard. "There will be plenty of time for that," he replied as they arose, and walked toward the drawing-rooms again. "Do not think I am going to give you up in a day — *after this journey*. We shall be together awhile." Again he was beside her, and for an instant his cheek rested upon the dark, shining shoulder. "Is it not something to be proud of, my Châli," he asked, lifting his head, "to be the woman chosen from all Europe for the pleasure, the companionship of Metternich, on one of his rare vacations — the woman for whom he makes kings, emperors, wait patiently in their cabinets?" In her deep, calm eyes for the moment shone the starry flattery of pleasure.

In the cream-hued satin-and-gold drawing-room which they were entering, and which precious porcelains and paintings splashed emotionally with color, they lighted their cigarettes. They moved about freely for exercise, glimpsing from moment to moment in their walk the purple dimness outside, where occasional yellow stars were swinging dangerously from the wild black hair of wind-touched trees, and the scents of night came in.

Suddenly she felt that Prince Metternich was becoming preoccupied. A thought was pushing her from him. It was as if a cloud drifted confusingly in between them. She felt it sensitively. She did not speak. She feared to break in upon his meditation which probably was of importance. At length he looked over at her with a new expression in his eyes. She felt he was estimating her afresh. When this silence on his part had lasted what seemed to her long, he declared:

"You will play havoc, Châli — with the hearts of those blond, pale Russians!"

The secret was out. *To Russia!*

"*Russia!*" The trained voice expressed something that resembled dismay.

"You are not displeased — little love?"

"It is, of course, as Your Excellency wishes." But he knew that the thought of that land of cold and storm was not welcome.

"Do not worry. The journey will not be hard. First to Tagan-

rog in the South, by the Sea of Azov. Almost all of it you can make by water — *quickly* — without discomfort. In addition you can afford to go leisurely — stop whenever you wish." He was trying to make the plan pleasant. But even these words, he knew, had not lessened the dismay which she felt at the suggestion.

"It is only you, Châli, I can trust with this most delicate, dangerous venture — because this little head of yours nothing has turned."

"And my duty there? What is that to be, Your Excellency?"

"Briefly, this. Alexander before long will be on the way to Taganrog. The pretext of his going is to review the army of the South, to see if it is in condition for the impending war with Turkey. But I do not believe that *that* is the cause. I feel sure that it is a pretext. Conditions in Russia are bad — *very bad.* Alexander is the cause of it, too. He is a romantic dreamer — and unfortunately upon a throne. Instead of putting romance into life as I do" — looking down upon her tenderly and smiling reminiscently, as she seated herself upon a fauteuil beside him — "he puts romance into politics. I do not know of a worse place where it could be put.

"He is thinking, planning, to free the serfs — and *I think* — *fear* — of giving Russia a constitution. Freeing the serfs at this critical moment would be like removing a dam which holds in check for utilitarian purposes waters which would become destructive. This must not be, *now!* This has alarmed me. His emotional, vacillating vision is threatening the ruin of mankind. It will bring on another French Revolution."

She waited, alert, silent, interested now, for what would come next. It was no slight undertaking, however, this he was to send her on. She did not know whether to be vexed or flattered.

"In addition, there is a widespread plot against his life, a plot whose roots are far-spreading, deep. You see, Russia has felt dimly what I have seen clearly — that *just at this time* Alexander is wrong. This barbarous monster, Russia, that is awakening from the sleep of centuries, must be my ally. It must help me stop world-revolution. It must help me combat the influence of England, with that arch-fiend Canning at head of foreign affairs."

She looked at him interrogatively, fear slowly creeping into the depths of her eyes.

"Not a *crime* — Your Excellency?"

"You know you are what I might call my honorable spy," he replied evasively. "That is what I was in my youth at the Court of Napoleon. What I want you to do is this: Urge on Alexander's natural inclinations — one of which is to give up the throne — *on some pretext or other*. He has thought of it often. You are merely to urge him toward what at the time happens to be the level of his greatest weakness. The spread of revolution must be stopped. Foster his dreams. Urge him toward those that will be *useful to me*. Make such use of the gifts with which nature and training have provided you as you have never made before."

She was listening intently, but with apprehension again instead of pleasure.

"To-day, perhaps, Alexander thinks he is Marcus Aurelius. To-morrow he is a philosopher. The next day he is a priest of the Church of Rome, or — *a penitent*. Is it wonder no one understands him? I doubt," he added, "if any one ever will."

Her mobile face showed how readily she was grasping his meaning. The road began to unfold a little. She recalled a miniature she had once seen of this Russian ruler. She had remembered long the peculiar charm of his mouth.

Again the great statesman became meditative and preoccupied. She had faith in his mental clairvoyance, his winged, far-reaching vision. She knew that the senses of Metternich were as alert for sounds of future, of popular demonstration, as the senses of the savage for game. Prince Metternich could now distinguish plainly the stealthy, oncoming feet of uprising masses, not only desirous enough, but angry enough, from centuries of deprivation, of oppression — and now, being united, mighty enough — to overthrow, to trample under foot the power of kings, the nobility, and then the prerogatives of wealth. She understood now that this discernment, the firm determination to check it if he could while yet there was time, were the motive power behind the present plan. She knew, too, that the part he had selected for

her to play would not be inconsiderable. She was flattered by this display of faith in her. And yet it was a good deal to confront, that unknown land. He interrupted her meditation.

"I assure you, Châli, that the terrors of the French Revolution were not over on the day the guillotine first fell into disuse in that laughing city by the Seine. Quite the contrary! Its power was increased. Instead of being centered in Paris, it was multiplied. It was scattered over the world, undermining beliefs, old standards, former habits of living, just as the persistent sun of spring slowly melts the snow-fields. I fear — " Here he hesitated. He dreaded to clothe the thought with the brief reality of words.

"I *fear* — it was the beginning of a slow world-dissolution, out of which, and after which, centuries later, a new and an entirely different civilization will be born. I fear, sometimes, that it was the first terrifying announcement of a new cycle of time. They, of course, who are not trained thinkers, or sensitive sociological observers, who live just from day to day, between the *potage* and the pudding, so to speak, are incapable of foreseeing — or *fearing* — "

He hesitated again, for some reason she did not know. Then his mind reverted to the past. "I had a chance to see it with my own eyes — the first breaking-up of the *old world*, the first fierce onslaught of the French Revolution — the masses turned loose upon the aristocracy. I was brought up, as you know, at the Rhenish Courts, where my father filled various posts in capacity of Minister — just as I do now. I was a student in Strassburg University — when suddenly the city was filled with refugees, with the naked, starving nobility of France — fleeing from the rabble. The public buildings were opened to shelter them — and the University halls. We students were turned out to make room for them. I saw these pale, terrified people — men, women, little children — clad in ragged silks, velvets, laces, clutching frantically their gems, fleeing with feet that were bare, that were bleeding; delicately nurtured people who were unused to hardships. It is something I cannot forget. It is something I do not wish to see again. I learned then what it meant to stir up the

dormant, unfriendly masses. It is the power of an ocean, unleashed in storm."

Now she had received the significant key to his policy of the last few years. She understood things that had puzzled her. In the light of this fear all was clear. But Russia — how she hated the thought! *Russia — so far away —*

"Do you know, Châli, that pleasure has not existed, *for itself, I mean*, since the Revolution? Joy is dying out of the world. The time will come when it will be no more. Something new then will light the hearts of men. Upon the pleasure stored up in mankind in the old days of leisure and of power, the heart of France must live for generations. From this same stored-up wealth of pleasure all its art will have to be born, until art can no more be made.

"Every one, of course, knows that there has been nothing that can be called *Society* since the Revolution. There has been nothing since but its pale, its cheapened simulation. Think what it meant, my dear! A race of specially trained men and women, delicately tempered, witty, brilliant, and some of them noble — living upon the heights of life, freed from work, freed from forced effort, from base emotions such as envy, poverty, greed, and busied with cultivation of the things of the mind! Unjust? *Unfair?* But God gives varying talents to men when they are born. Is that unfair, too? Then it is God whom we must condemn.

"Unfairness, probably, enters into the making of things that are supremely fine — or that other name for unfairness — Nature's name, *selection*. I speak not as a moralist alone. I speak not as a political reformer, but as an artist, and as a trained observer. Absolute equality can exist only in an imaginary world, my dear!

"And we have not yet seen its supreme dissolution, this great society of the past. Ah! my Châli, I suffer, at the vision of what I believe to be coming! All the superiorities of the past, which are a part of place, of preferment, will vanish. On the way to the making of that future, which no one now can foresee in its entirety, there will be a sort of human hash, a social condition which will resemble chaos, when the descendant of kings will marry (say) the peasant's son, the ditch-digger's daughter. In this way

will be brought about the leveling for the successful upbuilding of that new world, that vaunted socialistic super-structure, which I am glad to say I shall not live long enough to see. But, *the future belongs to the people.*"

While he was speaking, it seemed to Châli that Metternich had changed subtly. He had become, upon a sudden, a figure great, pitiful, even tragic, bemoaning as he was the slow crumbling of that old civilization in which he had been brought up, which was the only thing he could love or respect, and not knowing how soon the final collapse would come, nor what sort of a community would remain after it. She saw at the same time how well he himself, in body and mind, represented that old civilization of kings, that aristocracy of courtly living whose end he predicted, in short, the superiority of the few at the expense of the many. She began to wonder at this changed world of Europe, so different from what it was when she went to Algiers. She herself had seen the difference. People were not so happy. Conversation and friendship were not things existing now *purely per se.* Even happiness was being commercialized. In the depths of joy, of pleasure, there was *Fear*, wearing a dissembling mask, to be sure, but still it was there. Joy was gradually being withdrawn from life like the necessary heat of a dead and fading sun.

He went on in the same even, if slightly saddened, voice. She listened with the struggle of conflicting emotions growing stronger and stronger within her.

"I can look with respect upon the king if he was born a king, but not upon his serf made king by chance. In addition, the serf cannot be equal to it. The lowly born cannot withstand the seductions of power. It will make of him either a fool or a madman. I love marble and iron, but I could not love tin because I could not love anything base.

"In addition, I like a world that is orderly, where all is in place. It is autocracy and the church that have best done this. It may not represent ultimate good, but it is the best of which mankind is capable. The new world will not soon make anything to equal the old, in fineness, in delicacy of feeling, in unmixed power of faith. Too many cooks spoil the broth, even if it is only cabbage

soup. I hate the vision of a world all working for reform, and not living, not enjoying. Life was made to live. I hate this meddlesome setting to rights of other men's lives."

Emotion, anger like this, she had not seen in the princely Metternich.

"In another hundred years or so, however, there will be no shackles upon the world, of any kind, not even of wealth. After kings, power, place, then the rich man, too, must go. And then, it may be, faith — and the old religions — Intelligence, highly forced utility for purely commercial ends, will take the place of heart. Philanthropy will become a part of business. It will become one of the new trades. But when the world gets this great, this long-dreamed-of freedom, this outspread, dull, level monotony of democracy, of equality, it will not last forever. Nor will man wish it to. It will last until it reaches its zenith, its power of inner self-unfoldment, *ripens*, like a fruit, just as Society reached its zenith in France before the 'Terror.' Then the pendulum will begin to swing back again, toward the old autocratic, toward the personally centralized rule. History has recorded many times this swing of the political pendulum. Entire civilizations have died and been forgotten, which moved between these two different extremes. It will swing back again! I assure you that it will because, to give only one reason, there is an end to the range of inventiveness in man, although there may not be to the progression of forces in nature; and because, in recurrent time, the best will dominate. Life will not renounce easily or forever that glorious picture which was the past. Perfection can never be reached, but merely a *temporarily* greater or lesser good. And the reality of *good* must continue to exist in men's minds, more than in exterior facts. Good really is largely a reflected vision of something the physical eye may not register; an *ideal*, necessary, but still superior to life. That is why the thinkers, that is why the most enlightened, the most experienced, should decide for the masses, who are not intelligent enough to know what is best for them. The more developed the mind, the more unwilling it is to give governmental power to the masses."

And yet as he said this, within his heart there was grief, born

of the realization that nothing can stop the incoming of the tides of human evolution.

"Governments, peoples, races, pass through cycles of existence just like flowers, just like fruit-trees; bud, flower, fruit, decay. But the life-circle of governments, the life-circle of races is so large that one small human lifetime cannot sweep its entirety with vision. So the short-sighted individual thinks that each change must be final. Man, very likely, is chiefly happy for his inability to think.

"Individuals, foolishly and conceitedly, set out to seek some hidden, some mysterious, self-flattering cause for that which is merely Nature minding her own business, ripening dutifully the fruit of the human tree. It is like hiring a detective to find why a ripe apple falls to the ground. There are causes, to be sure, that *hasten* or *delay* the fall of the apple. But the detective is not necessary.

"It is upon disease, it is upon the manifold wonders of science, not upon brief, pitiful human life, and its mad political dreams, that man should place his detectives. He should do it in order to make man live centuries, instead of a few paltry decades. He should do it to banish illness, to banish waste of all kinds, to uncover and develop the powers latent in the earth; to chain the wind and the tides; to harness the sun; in short, to make the powers of nature, *not man*, work for man. That would make us all kings. Then there would be no political question, no economic question."

She saw that the great thinker was now forgetting, in some degree, the grief of the political seeker after power.

"*Ah! — the future will be very different!* It will not be bravely then upon the field of battle, after the manner of heroes of old, that wars of races will be fought. The old dramatic, picturesque days are dead. It will be basely, in the counting-room, in the factory, the diversified fields of commerce; in short, not in muscle, not in wasted blood, but in mind active upon the forces of matter."

Metternich's restless and imaginative brain was rapidly forecasting time and that astounding mechanical civilization of the future.

"Victory then will be something new, something altogether undreamed of; something wholly material, and as soul and nobility of spirit count, petty, even base. Victory will be in the weave of a piece of cloth, the invention of some sordid economical device — a washing-machine, an egg-beater, a new construction material; not in bravery, not in the skill of armored warriors, nor the sweep of cavalry; something petty. I repeat, deadening to the spirit, uninspired, but *commercially useful. The basis of life will change.*

"Most people, of course, would like only freedom, idleness, and their own way, which is just what the revolutionists are fighting for. Revolutionists are grown-up children who insist upon wreaking their will upon the world. There is baseness to be trained out of us all when we are young.

"Do you suppose I would not like it sometimes, too? Do you suppose I enjoy toiling like a beast of burden, day in, day out; living only for the good of a nation, and seldom, as just now, my love, for my own pleasure? Think what leisure would mean to a man like me! I am a musician, a trained scientist, a student of ancient literatures. As rich as leisure would be for me, I have been forced to forego it, because my conscience, because my intelligence, tell me how necessary I am to the place I fill.

"This is not merely personal preference on my part. Both observation and study have gone to strengthen me in what I believe; namely, the selective breeding of man, *long descent*, the chain-like going on and on of the aristocratic tradition. After the world has sated itself upon revolution, and its impossible dream of universal freedom, it must, I feel sure, come back to this. In the descendants of great races, great families, there are certain excellences, certain dependablenesses, certain points of honor, of fineness, certain rich, ripened kindnesses, that are not found frequently among the masses. The masses wish only to destroy. They wish only to pull down, to satisfy self. They know nothing of poise. They know nothing of the grace of peace, of the preciousness of preservation. What we are confronting now is what in all probability destroyed ancient civilizations, whose cycle of ripening had been completed, and whose greatness

to us to-day exists only in the flaunted name of some fabulous city. In addition, the Continent has been raked with wars. What we need now is peace. Peace is what we must have. Europe places itself in my hands to be saved — from the horrors of revolution, which means wholesale murder, suffering, poverty, destruction. I must be faithful to that trust."

Prolonged silence fell between them. Each was buried in his dream, while outside the purple, velvet night turned to black and the stars lengthened cruelly their cold light-arrows.

Metternich was the first to speak. She awaited the words with a sort of fear. "Here is the important point. For this I have summoned you from Algiers." His voice trembled slightly. He did not meet her eyes. "When Alexander reaches Taganrog — he must not go back again — to Petersburg."

"Your Excellency?"

"*Alexander must not go back again!*"

"*Your Excellency!*"

"The machinery to prevent it is already at work. Do not worry. Neither you nor I are to be blamed. In great politics the welfare of the individual is negligible. I told you that there was a plot against his life. In case you cannot influence him to abdicate — all you will have to do is to keep me informed of *the progress of the plot.* But he must not go back! The safety of Europe demands it. His weak, wild dreams are sending mankind to ruin. The ambassadors of Alexander at all the courts of Europe are disseminating his dangerous thoughts. Everywhere his statesmen are proclaiming his sympathies with liberalism. I have worked against these romantic notions of his as long as I can. The next move must be decisive. What, in addition, makes the matter more critical just at present is that Canning is England's Minister for Foreign Affairs. Canning is trying to array Russia against me. He is trying to isolate me in this corner of Europe, with only little, powerless, unpopular Prussia as my ally. If Alexander abdicates — *or dies* — either one of his brothers, Constantine or Nicholas, will join me and combat Canning. I am forced to bring into play every possible power to checkmate England. I am forced to do it, *to save Europe.* England's policy

has always been a selfish one, saving herself at the expense of others.

"Canning is brilliant — I grant you! But it is a misfortune that he is in power now. He hates me — perhaps envies me. And he fears me, too. He is brilliant — but he cannot be trusted. His nature is full of caprices. I do not know of a harder person to follow unless you throw reason away. You can no more trust the Irish than you can trust the gypsy. There is something within the two races that can neither be reckoned with nor relied upon. Even England has never fully *trusted* him."

Again to Châli he seemed pitiful, because it was evident that bravely, with his brain, and all alone, he was trying to stem the tide of a changing world — a world in transition, which his prophetic, powerful brain could vision clearly. Fresh passion of devotion for his ideals began to inspire her. He had always had the power to sway her with his aristocratic presence, his charm, and his eloquent tongue.

"A selfish dullness, to state facts as they are, is the secret of England's success, and the ability to make the world believe that she is something which she is not. England's cliffs are chalk, my darling, but they resist the waves as if they were granite. There you have England, dear!"

Again she was forced to admire the subtle diplomatist who knew so well how to combine seriousness with frivolity. His profession had no more skillful mouthpiece than this last representative of the old order.

"I must dominate Russia! That alone can save the present, and guarantee the future. Alexander must not go back. There is a saying to the effect that no one can trust an Asiatic. But that must be proved to me." He smiled down upon her significantly.

"A truce to politics!" — getting up and drawing her up by her two hands from the fauteuil. "Let us change politics to love. Before we retire we must go out upon the portico, to look at the face of the night bending over the lake.

"When you first came to me, dear one, you were only a little girl — in your teens. But you brought me the silence, the peace,

of those rich, painted mosques of your East. Now you come to me from Africa — with the scents of the desert upon you."

Then Prince Metternich, preoccupied as he frequently was with what posterity would say of him, declared:

"Sometime here guides will point out to tourists the château where Metternich loved Châli the Persian, just as to-morrow they will point out to you and me, over there on the south shore, the villa where Catullus, the Roman exquisite, lived and loved. In history, beautiful Garda will belong to you and me as much as to him."

His happiness and his high spirits were returning. This villa-bordered lake, which the Roman poet had worshiped, formed a fitting setting for that atmosphere of love, of luxury, in which statesmen of the old régime, like Prince Metternich, who possessed great range of personal tastes, carried forward their political plans.

His words had had their old effect. They had attuned her to harmony with himself. He put his arms gently about her. For a few minutes they enjoyed in silence the sweet late night together by the water. Then he turned her toward the great stairway, shining, eloquent and white and lonely, under the flickering candles.

"Together we will dream to-night, my Châli, that the world is as it used to be, not in unrest, in revolution. We will dream to-night, you and I, that we are still enjoying the proud security of imperial calm, that the splendor of the past, of time, still unfolds for us alone. We will forget the vulgarity, the danger, of those wild and rampant masses that cry for blood."

By the porticos of the château as the night wore on the plumed and purple peacocks sometimes became restless, ruffled their wings, or lifted their airy crests as if desirous to measure time or sense the day. A yellow luxurious moon rose over the lake, poised in the serene sky above the white roof; and the love of Metternich caressed her with a subtle delicacy devoid alike of too much passion or insistence.

CHAPTER XIV

CRIMEA AND THE GARDEN OF A KHAN

When Alexis Sergiewitch awoke the next morning he was ashamed of the trick he had played upon Count Woronzow. It was more than shabby, look at it as he would. It was contemptible. This self-confession made his delinquences fall upon him like a besieging army. It was just as shabby not to have remembered his friends in Petersburg with letters, Schukowsky in particular, whose wise counsel had shielded him, and who had worked to help him get away safely. And his own family at home! He had not written to his mother, his old nurse, Arína Rodiónovna, nor his sister Olga. It was as if they had ceased to exist. He had thrown wisdom and common sense to the winds since he came to Bessarabia, where he had lived in a wild delirium. He had expended his energy in orgies. He had been a madman. In this momentary, clear, hard grasping of reality, this coming to, so to speak, he could not look upon himself favorably.

It was bad, *very* bad, the affair with Countess Woronzow. But if he had not been caught making love to her, some other man would have been caught doing it. And then *he* was not really in earnest. That made it *some* better, he thought. Old Woronzow, too, could not be expected to understand that making love nowadays was merely a pastime, not a tragedy. He was behind the times, of course. All young men did it when they could not think of anything else to do, just as they dueled, danced. It had the same importance. It was one of youth's catalogued amusements. It was a combination of duty and necessity, which belonged to young manhood. Besides, if you are alone, at midnight, with a pretty woman like Countess Woronzow, and the champagne is both plentiful and good, what else is there to do? Then he smiled whimsically at the thought that it was old man Woronzow himself whom in his heart he loved, and not the pretty young wife at all. When life was so strange, so upside down as that, how could any one blame him greatly?

Count Woronzow's morning meditations were no clearer, nor more easily disentangled than those of Alexis Sergiewitch. His gayly frivolous wife did not make an appearance before midday. He ate breakfast alone, and had abundance of time in which to think.

Odessa was ringing with the scornful epigrams, the naughty, unprintable jingles, the undignified escapades of Alexis Sergiewitch. When any one longed for revenge upon an enemy, he made up a rhyme about him and tacked to it the name of young Alexis Sergiewitch. He had become a walking reference-book in which evil intentions of various kinds were inscribed. In addition, the example of insubordination he had been setting for the other youthful office *employés* was bad. It could not safely be put up with. He must send him away. The best thing he could do, he concluded, would be to follow his courier of the night before with another this morning, telling Alexander that he was going to send Alexis Sergiewitch farther south for a while, and for two reasons. One was to get him out of the country and away from Odessa; and the other to enable him to regain his health. There was no doubt about his looking ill. These years of unrestrained dissipation of various kinds, in the South of Russia, had made inroads upon his constitution. Any one could see that. He was too pale, too thin. This time he should have a guardian, since, evidently, recalling swiftly the dramatic interrupted scene of the night before, he was incapable of taking care of himself. That would be good for young Pushkin, and it would bring back peace to himself.

But who should the guardian be? Not a pleasant position, surely, for any one. He thought solemnly for a while. He went carefully over his list of friends, of acquaintances. *Ah* — he had it! His old friend, General Raevsky, who was right here in Odessa at this moment, and whom he had had the mishap to overlook. General Raevsky was not only a friend of long standing, but a person after his own heart, upon whom he could rely. He had been through the Napoleonic wars with Count Woronzow. He was one of the heroes of 1812. He had commanded, nobly, at Borodino, under Kutusov. It should be General Raevsky! He felt happier and relieved. He had hit upon the right expedient.

The two should set out from Odessa for the Crimea, for the Caucasus, taking their time for the trip. The latter, he would make emphatic. He hoped they would remain away long. This not only relieved his mind now, but for a considerable period for the future. And until he was well out of the city, no matter how long that might be, he would see that he was strictly guarded.

At length Alexis Sergiewitch and General Raevsky sailed from Odessa. That morning, as it happened, the broad, hospitable Gulf, which can shelter the ships of all nations, was calm, and serenely azure. To look out upon it was like a promise of happiness. Alexis Sergiewitch felt this. He rejoiced. There was something about contact with beauty that usually restored him to his normal condition of being. He was glad to be going away. It was not so bad, after all, this traveling at an Emperor's expense.

Odessa from the sea, as they sailed away that soft morning of spring, shone white and splendid, crowning the bold cliff upon which it is situated. And General Raevsky, contrary to his youthful companion's expectation, proved to be a sympathetic, even an agreeable acquaintance, despite his exterior, which belied such judgment. He was a short, fat, dark man, with the air of command, common to officers of experience. He had a short chin, a mouth that shut together somewhat sternly, and large dark eyes that bulged a little. He wore short "burnsides." They made two black, straight marks in the middle of his cheeks; and when he walked he leaned back, as if he were strutting, and his round, fat belly stuck out. He treated Alexis Sergiewitch like a friend. It was just as if they were two boys setting out on a pleasure excursion. He did not in any way refer to the past, nor the reason of their going, nor offer the vain but impolite hope that Alexis Sergiewitch would behave better in the future. He merely smoked comfortably day after day, or read a new novel called "Hans of Iceland," by a young Frenchman by the name of Hugo, watched the blue, sunny water, and left Alexis Sergiewitch to himself. He had been reprimanded, scolded, until he was confused and weary. He appreciated the treatment of General Raevsky. And the trip they were starting on was beginning to be so delightful. There was plenty to occupy his mind and eyes.

Leaning upon the railing and looking down upon the second-class deck below him, Alexis Sergiewitch saw a varied crowd; tall, black-capped Persians, gay-coated, laughing Georgians, handsome Circassians, eloquent-eyed Syrians, and peoples he could not readily classify, all turning homeward after transacting business in the popular world-port they had left, where free trade prevailed. On this deck they smoked, quarreled, gossiped, made tea, ate, dressed, and slept, and he could not look enough at the kaleidoscopic picture.

It was truly delightful, the sailing leisurely southward on this warm sunny sea in spring. He was conscious of a luxurious, satisfying sensation that day after day helped to prolong. It was almost as if his heart's wish of escaping from Russia by a Turkish ship and joining Byron were being realized, and he was really on his way to that land of white-columned marble and black cypress-trees. Perhaps something really would happen, he thought hopefully, allured by the sunny vistas that spread about him, to make the wish come true.

The water was changing color daily as they swung south. It was growing brighter. It was growing richer-hued, and the distances more deeply blue.

At Eupatoria, which was the first place where they were scheduled to stop, he observed with interest his first mosque. The Orient had come to meet him. It was holding out a welcoming hand. Here fezzes and turbans came on board in greater numbers. He regretted he could not land. He watched the city disappear in a merry, rollicking wind, which set all its little windmills whirling, and made him clutch sharply at his cap.

South from Eupatoria began the radiant coast which Countess Woronzow had talked about, which princes have made their playground, poets sing of, and where the new-rich, after the Great War, had been erecting fairy palaces.

At Sebastopol, where the halt of the sailing vessel was lengthened to land cargo, which was intact and uninjured by cannon fire now, since this was more than a quarter of a century before the Crimean War, the indulgent General Raevsky decided they would land, leave their baggage at an hotel, and take a trip in-

land. They agreed to take a look, at least, at famous Bakshi Serai.

Alexis Sergiewitch could not look enough at the round, blue circle of the Gulf, under that tremendous wall of rock that dominates it, and the bristling fortifications which bore the name of Sebastopol. He remembered that Catherine the Great gave it the name when she came here once with Prince Potemkin. General Raevsky, who was just as interested in everything to be seen as Alexis Sergiewitch, and who had all the enthusiasm of a boy in the subject of traveling, pointed out upon a cliff what he believed to be the entrance to the Kozarsky Gardens, and then he named the forts. The water by the side of the vessel was swarming with little boats which had come out to meet them, and the landing-place there was all gayety, excitement, and noise.

General Raevsky, after depositing their traveling-bags safely in a French hostelry near the wharf, hired two saddle horses and a red-capped Tartar guide, and they turned their eager faces inland.

A journey of some length lay before them. They agreed to take it leisurely. It seemed to Alexis Sergiewitch that he had never been so happy in his life. There was no one to nag him. There was no one to try to reform him. There was no one to insist upon his doing anything he did not wish to do. He was looking out upon a new, strange, interesting world. Here about him in Crimea, in early spring, he had found, for the first time, a sort of delirium of light that corresponded to some old unuttered longing within him. It seemed to beat upon him in great waves of brightness, great waves of joy.

Sometimes they trotted along under walnut-trees of prodigious size. Then they rode softly through gracious groves of white mulberry-trees, where the grass was thick and yielding and the young blossoms floated down like feathers. It was an attractive land to look upon. It charmed his eyes.

In little valleys, hidden away among the wooded hills, he saw the pale, sulphur-yellow moons of the evening primrose. He smelled the wet fragrance of the white lily-of-the-valley. On the levels, along the highway, the poplars and the white birches

gave off fragrance, and everywhere the plum-trees were in flower. Under his feet were wild tulips, both yellow and red. The little farmhouses they passed were set in friendly gardens, where hollyhocks were glad to grow. Wherever they stopped for food, they drank freely of the fine white wines of the country. He was so happy he even forgot those lightly spoken words of Countess Woronzow: "*Photius has demanded your death of Alexander.*" Death seemed far away in this radiant land of spring.

Suddenly, then, like penance after pleasure, the farms, the gracious field-lands ended. The light lessened. They rode briskly into a deep, narrow valley of black, fantastic rocks which towered gloomily above them, like a dream out of the "Purgatorio." After picking their way carefully over this rocky road, which was difficult and little more than a path in places, they came out upon a level desert space. Nothing grew upon this vast pale plain. Its unmarked surface was melancholy, disconcerting. The hoofs of their horses echoed hollowly upon it as if it were a crust concealing a cavern. It took them more than two hours to cross it. Then General Raevsky galloped up excitedly and seized the arm of Alexis Sergiewitch, who with loose-hanging bridle was riding a few paces ahead, lost in thought.

"Stop your horse, boy! *Look!*"

In the distance he could see a bouquet of white, slender minarets, glistening above the plain.

"*Bakshi Serai!*" repeated the old man, with emotion in his voice. "That means a palace made of gardens, *my boy.*"

Bakshi Serai is one of the places of earth whose approach keeps a peculiar delight because it is so unexpected.

When they entered the little city which bears this name so freighted with the magic, the tragedy of the past, they found that it occupied another long, narrow valley similar to the one through which they had just traveled, in which there was a winding river called the *River of the Fetid Water.* It was frowned down upon by a top-heavy, crumbling mountain, which looked to Alexis Sergiewitch as if at any moment it would fall over and crush them.

It seemed to Alexis Sergiewitch, as they started to ride through a poplar-bordered street to a Russian inn, because General

Raevsky insisted upon Russian food, that the sky overhead was bristling with lacework muezzin towers, and that he had entered fairy-land.

"It was not so long ago, my boy, that the Tartar Khans themselves ruled here!" declared the old man. "They were not driven out until 1783. Not so long ago, you see!"

They were standing at the moment in the famous palace of Girei of the many loves, which Prince Potemkin, the uncle of Countess Woronzow, had had restored. They were in that noble court of the old Crimean Kings, with its slender, glistening columns, with its spaciousness, its elegance.

"It is a veritable palace of the Arabian Nights!" exclaimed Alexis Sergiewitch excitedly, looking about at that lovely commingling of stone and Moorish inlay, where line follows line in bewildering tracery. Upon the walls about him he beheld for the first time that divine interlacing of design, the loveliest the hand of man has made, the arabesque. Just then General Raevsky was reading aloud the inscription upon the fountain — that charmingly worded boast of desert people who have so loved the decorative richness of water: "*In Damascus, in Bagdad, you can see many things, but you cannot see such a beautiful fountain.*"

"This is the farthest north," went on the General, "that the faith of Islam has penetrated. And even here it could not last."

"It was made for the South, it seems to me," replied young Pushkin abstractedly.

"That is right. That is right — for the South," agreed the old man.

Together they wandered happily through those solemn and at the same time voluptuous gardens, which Islam alone has known how to make wherever its faith has predominated. They felt upon their hearts its peculiar gift, peace, as if the pressure of time had suddenly become less heavy. They felt its non-inquisitive contentment with the present. In their ears there was the lulling murmur of doves and the tinkle of water. And in the atmosphere about them the blossoming scent of the orange and the olive.

"This architecture," the old General insisted, "was made by

the only race in the world who knew how to lift idleness to the plane of art. The world has lost something, my boy, by not being able to produce it to-day," he added regretfully. "Something rich has gone out of life, something that had the gift of making man happy."

He watched the graceful, youthful body of Alexis Sergiewitch moving nimbly about in the sunlight, between the shining columns, or under eloquent Moorish arches; and he did not wonder that women had found him so likable and did not make effort to resist him, and then he wondered why he had not seen anything of that evil, insubordinate temper of which Count Woronzow had warned him. But General Raevsky was a Russian. Count Woronzow was more of an Englishman, and he worked sincerely to make Russia like that England which kept no surprises, which he had known in his boyhood. With General Raevsky, Alexis Sergiewitch was courtesy and amiability itself. There was nothing to complain of.

Alexis Sergiewitch, in return, found the old gentleman as indefatigable a sight-seer as he was. He, too, despite his fat, shaking belly and toothpick legs, could appreciate beauty and nobility of line. In truth their tastes were not dissimilar.

They explored the Khan's palace, the vast, flower-bordered gardens that surrounded it, and then the mosques of the city, whose number was considerable. The old man told him their history, their romance. Afterward, they turned their attention to the little shops along the winding street, which are rather bazaars than shops, and where articles of red morocco are found, fine daggers, weapons, objects of iron and silver. Alexis Sergiewitch saw that here began that marvelous mastery of metal which reaches its final perfection farther East, in Mecca, in Damascus.

When evening came, however, the old man succumbed to the pleasures of the table. Food and wine were his seductions. He could not resist them. This made him disinclined for exercise and long for an easy-chair. He spent the evening in his room, resting, writing letters to his family or assembling notes of his journey. In the evening Alexis Sergiewitch was left alone.

He, in truth, was not averse to this. For some days he had been trying to get at the bottom of what seemed to him an interesting mystery. Near their hostelry was a palace of Tartar days which had a mysterious tenant. The tenant was a woman about whom he was not able to find out anything, however he tried. This increased his eagerness. Her servants had been quizzed. They would not tell who she was. Nor would they say what her business was nor where she was going. Hotel *employés* told him how long she had been there. She must be a person of importance, they declared, otherwise she could not be temporarily installed in this building, which was for tourists to see, and not for hire.

The room of Alexis Sergiewitch in the Russian hostelry was on the side nearest the Unknown. He could see her occasionally, in the garden, in the day. But most important of all, at night he could hear her playing upon a violin. Sometimes he caught glimpses of her in an upper chamber, between the pillars, under the dim light of a swinging lamp of Turkish glass. Her face, however, he could not see distinctly however much he tried, but he felt that she must be young.

The music held him spellbound. It poured madness into him. It was strange. It was sense-disturbing. It was the music of Africa. There was something about it hypnotic, compelling. It was as if his flesh remembered in some fabulous long ago. It was music as old as the pyramids, and their monstrous architecture, and like them it was monstrous, too. It evoked the soul of something prodigious, something perished, yet alluring, of which nothing tangible remained to-day, and which the mind must be able to re-create within its lonely chambers if it wishes to see. This music brought to him the old imperious longings which the diverting incidents of travel had temporarily put to sleep: for light, warmth, pleasure, the seductive sweetness of women, and the gratification of emotion.

The last night of his stay in Bakshi Serai came. The traveling bags had been packed, the hotel tariff paid, the red-capped Tartar guide informed of the hour of departure, and General Raevsky gone early to bed. The violin called. He could resist no longer. He started to follow it.

Where the shrubs, the trees, made a temporary shelter of darkness, he climbed one of the slender pillars. He entered softly the room of the swinging lamp of Turkish glass, where long rows of open, curving-topped windows gave upon the night.

Châli was in the room. She was standing opposite him. It was just as he thought, she was young. But she did not look as he expected her to. She was of some other race. She belonged in this architectural setting because she was a woman of the East. To-night, as it happened, she was dressed like the women of Algiers where she had lived and some of whose habits she kept. She wore loose, overlapping gauzes, leaving the arms bare. The gauzes were held together in points upon the top of her shoulders; emerald green under sad violet under lemon yellow, splashed with magenta dots.

She was not afraid. She did not cry out. She stood and looked at him with eyes in which there was neither anger nor fear. He had no thought that such a woman would be his *vis-à-vis*.

She, on her part, who knew so well African races, saw before her a slender, yellow negro, although he was dressed as a man of the upper class. His hands, she observed, were pink on the inside like the hands of any negro. At the same time he was a figure of distinction, even if he did not possess what is strictly known as beauty. They both spoke the same world-tongue, French.

"I am not a robber, Madam," bowing, smiling gracefully.

She looked at the slender figure as if the explanation were superfluous.

"Your music called — *you*. What could I do?"

Her face was grave.

"I was forced to break in here — by homesickness, the lure of you."

She understood. She did not appear surprised.

"I have been listening all these nights. Do you blame me? To-morrow I go away. I shall never return to Bakshi Serai. I shall never see you again. Surely you will forgive me — and play for me, once. Be good enough to let me have that to remember!"

As if it were the most natural thing in the world, this request from an unknown visitor who had climbed into her window, she

picked up her violin. While she tested the strings, he was speaking.

"A momentary weariness of living, a boredom that amounts almost to illness — a longing for something, I do not know what, impels me to do things for which there can be no explanation — and for which, usually, I am punished."

An Arab love-song sobbed upon the air.

"Where did you first hear that? Tell me!" he implored excitedly, as it ended.

A far memory came sadly back to Châli which she could not utter. She had heard it first upon the wild, red soil of Africa, the ecstasy of black palm-plumes above her, under a voluptuous tropic night. And the man who sang? Again in memory she saw him, too. How was it possible to forget? Strange to say, he resembled the man who was standing before her now. Such a resemblance could not be without kinship of some kind. In this unknown, too, there were the ardors of the black races.

To-night she was slightly homesick, lonesome like Alexis Sergiewitch. She was regretting the South which she did not wish to leave. She did not relish this formidable Russian journey ahead of her, with its hinted, tragic culmination. She wished there were some way to get out of it. She had had enough of danger. She wished she could turn around and go back. "Most people," she reflected, "who fall into the clutches of Metternich become his prey." In the presence of this Unknown she recalled vividly her life in Algiers. He was the color of the lions of the desert there — tawny and pallid.

"Once more, play for me!" he begged, emotion audible in his voice. He had no desire now to run away and join either Byron or Shelley. This caprice had gone to join his other caprices. There were lives besides theirs. Was not there *his own?* There were many other lands, too — *Africa!* What distant magic in the world! As he listened to her violin, he became increasingly conscious that *no present* would ever be sufficient for him to live in, however rich. With his brain, with his longing heart, he would live in all lands, in all ages. Sumptuously, as the fiddle bow swept on, he projected himself outside the limiting bonds of

time, in the potential splendor of dreams. He did not know, luckily, or he could not have been so happy in the present, that in his undeveloped, crude Russia, there was no one who could appreciate such an accomplished sensualist. He did not know that he must suffer the peculiar, the sad exile of isolation caused by envy. The tragedy had not touched him. He was still young, still brave.

How evocative was her presence! It enlarged the boundaries of vision, of comprehension. Vast landscapes swung before his brain, unknown countries which he had not seen and perhaps could never see. Again the longing became imperative to get out of Russia, to be free. *To be free* — somewhere upon the face of the earth! To lead the life that was impelled by his own genius.

Centered upon her he felt the distilled magic of ancient civilizations. Fascinating cities of Islam flashed their fervor upon him, and in the brain of him who dreamed so prodigiously under the spell of music there was something akin to the dream, something of opulent Asia. Her presence made him live intensely.

"Let us go to the old Khan's garden," he begged when the fiddle bow fell. "Make my last night in Bakshi Serai something always to remember — or regret," he added upon a sudden with wistful premonition.

"Will you not tell me who you are now?" he pleaded, his breath softly caressing her neck, as they entered the lonely space of flowers, and felt about them in the warm night an expanding of the soul of youth.

She shook her head gently.

"Why not?"

"*Perhaps* — I cannot. *Perhaps* — I may not —"

"Countess Woronzow told me in Odessa of a beautiful Oriental who is the spy of Metternich. I believe that is who you are."

At the name of *Metternich*, he thought her face changed slightly, but he could not be sure in this uncertain light. To her it occurred upon the moment that Metternich was old and *blasé*. He had loved too many women. The man beside her was nearer her own age. He was young, impressionable, full of fire.

"Hear my reasons!" he continued. "You are not frightened,

you did not call your servants when I entered, as another woman would have done. That presupposes training. You are traveling alone, I do not know where — but under powerful protection, else you could not be in the Tartar palace. You are concealing your identity, the destination of your journey. The reason is political, I believe, not personal."

"I am merely making a pilgrimage, as you see, to one of the shrines of my race," she explained indifferently. "I am not a European, you know!"

"You have been in Algiers, where Metternich has been busy watching the ambitious plans of other nations, France in particular."

"You see, I do not ask *your* name," was the gentle reminder.

"No, because you are playing fair. I suppose we must remain mysteries to each other."

"I know that you are Russian, young, and that we can meet amicably in the Land of Music," she answered with gentle evasion.

The perishing, columned palace, which had been so lovely in some romantic long ago, threw its charm about them.

"What a night!" whispered young Pushkin as they seated themselves upon a bench of stone where a young Crimean Khan had once loved and dreamed, just as he was doing now.

"You should know the nights of Algiers!" was the quick reply. "And the flowers! In cafés at night there, the people are literally drunk with the breath of roses, the breath of jasmines. And" — in a whisper, as if the words were not meant for him — "almost always — *at night* — on the edge of the desert, there is love."

They were silent, both feeling the urge of youth and emotion, while around them spread that disconcerting mingling of voluptuousness and solemnity which characterizes the gardens of Islam.

The hour was late. White valley mists were drifting in. They were drowning the moon. There was something of the fabulous glamour of Asia here now. There was something that had belonged to the nights of the Grand Moguls, to the nights of that furious lover, Akbar the Great. They, too, had built gardens like this, gardens suitable for artists in their youth, warriors, lovers,

the supreme delights of earth. As if divining his thoughts, the woman beside him asked:

"Did you know that the greatest monuments to love have been built by men of my faith?"

He looked at her wonderingly and shook his head. "But I am willing to believe anything — *after this*."

"Then believe me, and ask no questions."

"Why not tell me who you are?" — his voice trembling now.

Again gently she shook her head.

"It is impossible."

"Then — if I must give you up forever after to-night, and never know your name — *love me now!* I cannot go away — never to see you again — know where you are —"

Beautiful and calm she sat beside him giving expression to the words of fatalism of her faith.

"If it is written that we shall meet again," she replied, touched by his communicative youth, his evident sincerity, and pain, "we shall meet. Be sure of that! If it is not written — names would not help it — either yours or mine."

She lifted one hand, either in protest or farewell, he could not tell which. He did not know what impulse was swaying him most. Above them a nightingale burst into song, a lone, belated one evidently, that had neglected to migrate at the same time with the others, northward to the steppes of Russia. The old, impassioned song was ringing in his ears again, the same song of passion, of delight, that had echoed above the love of him and Sari that lost summer, down on the Ackermann Steppe, toward Ismail.

Châli had risen. She had moved a few steps away, where she stood graceful, aloof.

"Tell me that sometime you will be in Petersburg!" he pleaded. "Tell me I shall see you again! Do not let me go without hope!"

The mists were floating, blurring, between. She was becoming indistinct.

"In the language of my country," she replied softly, and he fancied a little tenderly, "the words *garden* and *Paradise* are one. That means promise, does it not?"

CHAPTER XV

A DINNER-PARTY BY THE GULF OF FINLAND

After the *débâcle* of the carefully arranged plan of Marie Antonova, which resulted from sending the saddle horses away to the meadow, sullen, impenetrable silence settled upon her, in which it was as difficult to find a companionable, conversational pathway as it is for a skilled mariner to steer upon the sea in winter, under impenetrable fog. If Alexander and Sophie amused themselves alone together, it seemed to their delicate intuition a deliberate neglect of her. Then they were ashamed. And if they attempted to draw her into any pleasant plans with them, to have her join in a drive, a boating trip, she sulkily refused, and they remained at home. She managed not only to spoil her own happiness, but theirs. The house, the gardens, seemed to vibrate with her displeasure. Even the disciplined servants seemed tainted with it. Without saying a word she knew how to make life unbearable for every one. Not at any time had it come to her to consider the pleasure of others. The word *duty* did not occur in her limited, personal vocabulary.

At length she complained to Alexander that this narrow, confined way of living was injuring her nerves, and she could not put up with it. It was making her ill. She really feared that she was becoming melancholy. She felt that she ought, for her own good, to return to Petersburg. He could remain here with Sophie, if he wished — and as long as he wished. He replied with some firmness that it was out of the question.

The end of the discussion was that he consented to a party. They spent two comparatively peaceful days following, while she made out the list of guests. When the list was submitted to Alexander, he drew his pencil through the names of a number of her woman acquaintances and that of the Polish actor Lasky.

At this Marie Antonova wept. She retired to her room with another headache. For one day thereafter she was invisible.

Then the argument was taken up anew. He explained to her gravely that guests invited to a country house signified a closer, a more intimate acquaintanceship, than those asked to huge public affairs in a city home. Here now, since his presence made it the royal summer residence, it became matter of state; she could invite, therefore, only the old nobility and intimate friends of long standing, among whom, of course, Count Schuvalow was numbered. And it would be good, as she suggested at once, to ask him to stay on for a few days after the dinner. Many of the invited list were summering like them on near-by estates. Sophie knew that the slight clearing-up after this of the domestic weather and the occasional rifts of feeble sunshine were due to the fact that Count Schuvalow was to come for a visit. Alexander, be it said, had no such knowledge. Easily placable always, he began to feel sorry that he had kept her here so long against her will.

The only important note of discord after this was just before the guests arrived, the early evening of the party, when Marie Antonova appeared in a dress which displeased Alexander. It lacked dignity, refinement, he told her. In it she resembled not the aristocratic châtelaine of a great mansion, but some wandering gypsy dancer. A skirt, too short, of white silk ruffles to the waist, each ruffle edged with black, and a very low bodice made entirely of jet. She carried a red feather fan. Upon her head was a crown of red roses. Alexander continued to look at the costume with displeased eyes. She stubbornly refused to change it. Sophie wore white, a simulated little girl's dress, and around her head, his last birthday gift, a filet of enameled forget-me-nots upon which tiny, diamond dewdrops trembled. A long scarf of heavy Spanish lace covered her shoulders to conceal her astonishing thinness.

When Count Schuvalow bent over her hand in greeting, then tenderly lifted it to his lips, it was evident that he was shocked at something he saw in her face, in her eyes. He looked again, quickly, sharply, as if to make sure. She had changed greatly in these weeks of summer he had not seen her. He paused by her side for a little before looking in the direction of Marie Antonova, or even greeting her, whose eyes rested upon him with a curiously

complex expression. When he left to speak to her mother, it was somewhat reluctantly, and there was a touch of mingled reverence or regret in his attitude. Gladly she saw him move on, because her more companionable friends, Prince Odojewsky, young Baratinsky, and young Mouravieff-Apostol, were just behind. Her slightly veiled voice was clearer and happier when she addressed them. He heard it. He knew at once how little he meant to her. Young Baratinsky bent hastily and whispered in her ear. There was a look in his eyes which only his heart could light. He wished to remain by her side. The others had to pull him away. Schuvalow noticed how Baratinsky's voice grew tender when he addressed her. She had much in common with both Odojewsky and Baratinsky, and nothing at all with him.

Then the clear, beautiful eyes of Alexander rested upon young Schuvalow for a moment, and his kind voice spoke inconsequential words of courtesy. He felt the impatient, lustful greed of Marie Antonova surge up against him like a buffeting wave. He could not think of anything that just suited him to say to her. He merely sensed that her smooth shoulders, under the jet, were very white, and the little clustering curls on her neck were soft and silken. He left her quickly. He avoided her eyes.

The gray, scornful, penetrating eyes of Prince Viazemsky were almost tender when he bent his head to touch his lips to the little feverish hand of Sophie Narischkin. Plainly he saw death in her face. He wondered that Alexander and Marie Antonova did not see it too.

Prince Viazemsky did not remain long with Alexander, because he knew the Emperor did not like him. In Marie Antonova he found a satisfactory target for his sharp tongue, and a shield always quick in defense, from much practice, to ward off the bitter arrows of his wit. He could not wound her and she did not care what he said. Women like Marie Antonova were a pleasant relief to Prince Viazemsky. He could have *carte blanche* with them. He could say whatever he wished. He knew perfectly well for whose eyes she was dressed to-night. And she probably knew that he knew and she did not care.

Count Orlow was serene, handsome, and Sophie Narischkin

was not displeased to meet him. He kept her two little childish hands in his for a few moments, with the freedom of a privileged acquaintance. He looked down upon her with a grave, impersonal tenderness. He told her he was glad not to find any shadows tonight upon the face of his little friend. She was very charming to look at, very appealing, and she pleased his aristocratic taste. Only women of race could appeal to the princely Orlow.

He lingered somewhat with Alexander, who was unfeignedly glad to talk with him. Alexander at once promised himself a longer conversation with Count Orlow after dinner had been served, and the guests were dispersed at their own good pleasure throughout the gardens.

Count Orlow found zest and amusement in delaying by the side of Marie Antonova, and dissecting, with his trained eyes, her present emotions. This was really the chief source of pleasure for him in society, the laying bare and then analyzing the impulses of women. She was restless, he knew. She was eager for dinner to be over. She was eager for the guests she was receiving to be scattered throughout the spacious gardens, which would mean temporary freedom for her. She was longing for the arms of Schuvalow. She had spent miserable weeks of starved solitude here, he felt, and the mere sight of the old Petersburg crowd gladdened her with memories of the past. She was especially gracious to him. Yet he knew that while she talked with him her mind was elsewhere and she wished he would hasten away. And on her part, she was vaguely wondering, too, why the good-looking, blond Orlow had never paid court to her. She was not fine-fibered enough to sense his peculiar psychological penetration. She did not appreciate his loyalty to Alexander. And she did not know that the Orlow men were famous judges of both women and horses.

In the polished but somewhat ponderous manner of old court days, Count Cyril Razumowsky and Count Bobrinsky were paying their respects to Sophie Narischkin. Count Bobrinsky's ponderousness was somewhat increased by his years, and now one could see plainly the peculiar, unlovely elongation from below the end of his nose to the end of his chin, which he had inherited from

his mother, Catherine the Great, in high relief just at this moment as he was bending his head to pass on. He was of the same blood as Alexander and they met in a friendly, intimate manner. Then his empty compliments, light as star-dust, brushed Marie Antonova, whom he despised, as he bowed quickly and moved on.

The tender sentimental heart of old, faded Count Razumowsky was touched at the appearance of the Emperor's daughter. The mere sight of her made tears come to his eyes, just as singing did sometimes, or a wild sunset over the lonely fields of his Ukraine, or the unexpected finding of a pressed rose in a yellowed love-letter. The romanticism of the South was in his heart. She could have touched to-night a heart much less susceptible than that of this faded, sentimental beau of long ago. Alexander was sincerely glad to see him. Such men were the reliable support of his realm. He wished they were all like old Razumowsky, who looked as if he had never been young.

The other less intimate friends went onward quickly, and tarried only an instant over the hand of "*la belle Narischkin*," as Marie Antonova was popularly called.

At dinner Count Schuvalow found himself by his frail little *fiancée* with her crown of unfadable forget-me-nots, and he determined to talk with her, to get better acquainted with her if he could. But his plan was upset by the fact that Prince Odojewsky was on the other side of her, and she paid no attention to him. All he saw of her was the disappearing sparkle of the little cold gem-dots that circled her brow, as she turned her face toward the young Prince, with whom she had entered happily upon some engaging topic. Young Baratinsky was longing to be beside her, too, and that consoled him a little. But the eyes of Marie Antonova were looking too often in his direction. He understood her without speech. He wondered futilely then if the ignoring of himself by Sophie was accidental, or if she *knew something* that had impelled her to do it. Baratinsky loved her. Could he have told her? He could not read her. He was not so used to women of her type. It was like trying to understand the heart of a lily. But Baratinsky could have understood her, he felt with quick regret.

Count Alexis Orlow was in his element. He was sitting beside Marie Antonova. He was telling her how the country had worked wonders for the beauty of her complexion. He declared that it was so necessary for both her and her daughter that he was going to suggest to Alexander that he keep them here until snow came. Then he pretended to be greatly surprised at her displeasure, and at her eagerness to return to Petersburg. Every once in a while Prince Viazemsky, who sat within hearing distance, joyously added a word to help on Count Orlow for the discomfort of Marie Antonova.

She asked for news of the city. He replied that there was not any, in *their set*, but that Lasky the actor was having an attack of midsummer madness, he had heard, for a ballet dancer. Try as he would, he could not recall the dancer's name. And neither could Viazemsky. But Viazemsky hastened to add that midsummer madness was, in his opinion, a dangerous disease. By these refractions, so to speak, of her temperament, he was delightedly measuring the condition of her *amour*. He believed with Viazemsky that nature had expended a good deal more upon the exterior than upon the interior of *la belle Narischkin*.

She was heartily glad when the meal was over and the guests gathered in companionable, self-chosen groups, preparatory to going out to view the famous flowering gardens of the Emperor under the pale, Arctic night.

Alexander had disappeared as if by magic. Her daughter, Prince Odojewsky, young Baratinsky, and young Mouravieff-Apostol were glad to be together again, and they were merrily wending their way toward the nearest door. She waited until Count Orlow and Prince Viazemsky had excused themselves, and were well out of sight. Then she went hastily after a black lace shawl and stood with it over her arm for a few moments, in a little hall adjoining the dining-room on one side. Presently Count Schuvalow saw her, but he did not approach. He understood at once that the shawl was to cover the whiteness of her arms and her skirt in the depths of some sheltering arbor, and that he was expected to watch where she went and then follow discreetly at a distance.

Alexander, as it happened, had gone with Count Bobrinsky to show that talkative old gentleman the growth of a pink crêpe-myrtle which the Count had given him two years before. The rest of the large dinner crowd were now surging toward all the exits, and the dining-table, under the tall candles, had the long, white, startling emptiness of a coffin.

After Count Bobrinsky and Alexander had inspected the shrub's growth, and had considered one or two confidential matters together, old Count Cyril Razumowsky joined them, and Alexander left to speak a word here and there to less known guests. Then it occurred to him that now he had the time for that pleasant, deferred conversation with Count Orlow to which he had been looking forward throughout the slow serving of the long dinner. He started in search of him. He walked about in various directions without being able to find either him or Prince Viazemsky, being detained from time to time by people who saw an opportunity to address the Emperor.

At length he paused by the little rise of ground whereon the scented cedars grew, in order from this slight elevation to mark better the places where he had not looked. He heard voices. On the other side of the tall shrubs was a seat he could not see. The first words he heard made him pause. It was Viazemsky's penetrating, slightly nasal voice that was speaking.

"You know, Orlow, you belong to the intimate family circle of the Emperor. Therefore it is your duty to tell him."

"I know — *I know* —" was the troubled response. "I've thought that way — *sometimes* — too — "

"No Orlow has been faithless to his Emperor. They have always protected them."

"That's true! *That's true.* But you see it would hurt him so — love is necessary to Alexander — It would destroy all his happiness."

"But — *think* — what will the result be — if you do not! It is bad enough now."

"I could not bear the grief in his face, Viazemsky. Honestly, I could not!"

"God in Heaven, man, see what she has done! She has taken

Schuvalow, the man her own daughter is to marry — for a lover. For weeks he has been, night after night, occupying Alexander's own apartment in the Narischkin Palace. How can you hesitate in the face of a thing like that?"

"But, you see, I love him, Viazemsky! I could not be the one to do it."

"And not only Schuvalow — but *Lasky!* Every one in Peter knows that she goes to that low-down fellow's rooms — where women of the street go, too. You know Lasky's reputation, do you not?"

"I know — I *know* —" more sadly.

"Think of the other men before these, too — *There were* —" Here his voice was so low that the listener, slightly deaf, did not catch the names. But the list was long.

"I talked it over with Bobrinsky — *once* — I tried to get him to tell him. But he does not see things the way you and I do to-day. He belongs to an earlier century, you know. And he could not bear to grieve Alexander any more than I could —"

"Right now, Orlow, she is with Schuvalow — in the honeysuckle arbor — down in the southeast corner of the gardens. She does not put the slightest discernment into her actions. And all these people strolling through the grounds to-night, *who* —"

Here the tall, listening figure moved quickly away and sought the honeysuckle arbor, which Viazemsky had just mentioned. His soft evening shoes made not a sound upon the dew-weighted grasses. His height enabled him to look down upon them easily. The arms of Schuvalow enfolded Marie Antonova. Their attitude showed they were just preparing to leave the arbor. He waited to hear no more.

He went directly to his sleeping apartments. He directed one valet to order a carriage, with the fastest horses, at once, and to take it outside the grounds to a place on the highway, protected from sight by the hedge. The other valet was ordered to pack his clothes and to start immediately for Peter in another carriage. He picked up a long black cape and prepared to descend the stairs again. Outside, in the upper hall, he met Marie Antonova,

who was breathlessly trying to return the black shawl to her room. He went up to her at once.

"Marie — I have just heard of your relations with Count Schuvalow, *and Lasky* — and from sources that leave no doubt. I learn that in the spring, when you requested me to sleep at the palace, Count Schuvalow was occupying my apartments. I have just seen your rendezvous with him in the honeysuckle arbor."

She was so surprised, and so breathless with haste, that she could not speak.

"This is the last time that you and I converse together. Keep everything from Sophie! I shall see her as usual."

Still she could not regain her breath or her self-control. When she lifted her eyes to his face she involuntarily shrank back. Scorn curved his lips. As dull as she was, she realized that this was not the type of man to do bodily injury. He was too far above her. But there was something about his face that was terrifying. It was as if it were frozen. It was a white mask of ice. For one sickening instant she had a glimpse of the abysmal depths that are in the human soul. And then he was gone.

As he went through the tall, curving hedge that formed the front entrance to the estate, he paused to look back. Sophie had just arisen from the rustic settee beside the yellow roses. She started toward him, when something in his face, something in his attitude, arrested her. She tried to speak. She tried to call his name. Her voice refused to obey.

He never forgot, in the after time, how pitiful she had looked, how helpless. The weird polar midnight, its unearthly pallor, which keeps a light that is neither day's nor night's, wrapped her about with an added unreality. The little sparkles of cold light about her brow were like the dim, lost stars of far, other worlds. She resembled a sprite of the snow. She resembled the fabled spirits of lovely women who belong neither to life nor death, and who are said to float above the falls of the Dnieper, in spring. He sensed rather than saw the deep love in her eyes. She tried to lift her arms. She tried to hold them out toward him. But his tall, athletic figure seemed unstable. It seemed to crumple.

Something terrified her and she could not speak. In a few minutes she started to follow him. When she reached the gate, he was swinging into the carriage which sped away.

Baratinsky, who had been looking for her, and had just succeeded in getting rid of Odojewsky and Mouravieff-Apostol, came up at this moment. She was white and trembling. Impulsively he put his arms about her to support her.

"What is it, little one? Tell me!"

She shook her head in a grieved, dazed manner.

"Darling — darling, *tell me!*"

She broke away from his detaining arms and disappeared. His face expressed a grief as great as her own. "If you knew how I love you!" he called after her.

Marie Antonova was like a drug addict, who in any painful climax of life has recourse at once to the drug that brings forgetfulness, that stills. Marie Antonova was a passion addict. She gave orders for Alexander's apartments to be prepared, that night, for Count Schuvalow, and then, calmer, she descended to her guests.

Sophie Narischkin, obeying a sudden but imperative impulse, told the lackey to find Count Schuvalow as soon as he could and tell him she wished to speak to him alone. She would await him by the bed of yellow roses in front of the house.

He wondered a little at this summons from his frail *fiancée* who had ignored him so pointedly at dinner and throughout the evening. He was considerably worried as to just what could be the cause of it. Her face, however, reassured him. It expressed no anger, no storm of emotion. She declared that she had never asked a favor of him and now she was going to begin by asking the first one. She hoped that he would grant it, and keep it secret from every one — even her mother. Relieved on his guilty conscience to find that trouble was not brewing, he promised readily enough, feeling, perhaps, he could pay a little of the sad debt that had made him feel ashamed of himself to-night.

"I wish you to order your carriage at once, and return to Peter. And I do not wish my mother, nor any one else, to know that you are going. You can leave your good-bye for my mother with

me." She spoke rapidly, with queer little pauses, as if to catch her breath.

"But why — is this?"

"Nothing but a caprice" — trying to laugh. "Nothing in the least important. You can trust me, can you not?"

Count Schuvalow was not, in truth, unwilling to go. He did not relish greatly days of intimacy under the roof of the Emperor, when that august person was present, with the indiscreet, emotional Marie Antonova. The unrestrained, reckless mood that he had found her in to-night in the honeysuckle arbor made him wish for an excuse to get away. It was risking too much to stay. In addition he was glad of an opportunity to please his rather difficult, childish *fiancée*, who so seldom addressed him. He promised good-humoredly. He left at once.

Late that night, when the guests were gone and Marie Antonova and her daughter were alone together, the former said:

"Where is Count Schuvalow?"

"He has returned to Peter."

"*What!*"

"Just as I said."

"Why did he go?" — in a tone that indicated rising emotion.

"I asked him to."

"Why?"

"I do not know, *exactly*. It was an impulse."

"You . . . you . . . *you!*" — getting up and advancing toward her daughter.

Marie Antonova went to extremes both in love and hate. Sophie Narischkin, exhausted by the late hour, the long dinner, the receiving, and the dramatic wordless interview with her father, sat weak and trembling, looking helplessly at the figure of fury that was advancing toward her.

"What do you not owe to me, you ungrateful girl? Why have you lived a soft life, and had flowers and diamonds flung at you? Why have people crawled on their knees to kiss your hands when they would not speak to me? Do you know? Because of a sin of mine! That is why. That is what made you the daughter of an

Emperor, instead of the daughter of that poor old fool, Dmitri Lvovitch, who sits in a corner and lets his face twitch."

The English governess and nurse for whom she had rung, feeling, suddenly, peculiarly weary, appeared now in the door at one end of the long drawing-room. The tense scene struck their senses. It prevented for the moment their entrance.

"All that makes you superfine and petted, I bought — I — with the sale of my body — I — with the sale of my soul! Now you think you are better than I, because you have not been forced to do such things. Now you think you can sit and judge me, reform me — make me different — you little waxen idiot — *you . . . you . . . you . . .* " Relapsing easily into the shocking speech of a woman of the street, such speech as her daughter had never heard before, Marie Antonova began to shriek in disappointed rage. She was like a wild animal whose prey has been forcibly snatched from its hungry jaws.

"Alexander has gone — *gone, I say* — and he will never come back — You will never see him again. Now you go — too. Do you hear me? You go too! — *Go, go* — I have no money to support you! For you my house has been turned into a combination hospital — *for years* — a sort of high-class nursery — to spoil my pleasures — Do you suppose I am going to spend *my* money on *you* — when I have n't enough for myself? *Get out!* Go and earn it — *the way I did!*"

The head of Sophie Narischkin fell forward in a dull, heavy way. A gurgling sound came from her throat. Two thin streams of red began to trickle slowly from her lips, across the white front of her gown and the scarf of Spanish lace. Marie Antonova, the wreath of red roses on her head wilted now and falling rakishly over one ear, rage, disappointment, and despair in her face, looked like a disgraceful, drunken, lascivious mænad on the Greek mountains, in some wild pre-Christian orgy.

"You English-faced bull-dog, you!" she screamed, noticing for the first time the governess standing by the door. "Come in here and take her away!"

The English governess, joined by the nurse, carried Sophie Narischkin to her room, where they disrobed her gently and put

her upon the bed. Her head bumped against them dully, as if it were made of wood.

As they climbed the long stairs slowly with their burden, the hysterical shrieks of Marie Antonova, who had now lost all self-control, rang in their ears.

In the morning Sophie Narischkin was dead.

CHAPTER XVI

CAUCASIA

They set sail from Sebastopol, upon a sea as smooth and gracious as the one that had speeded them from Odessa. If General Raevsky knew anything of the romantic night which Alexis Sergiewitch had spent in the garden of the ruined palace of Bakshi Serai, he kept the information to himself.

He had a chart of the radiant coast they were rounding so rapidly, and his mind was intent upon it. The high rock cliffs of Sebastopol threw long black shadows after them upon the water as they swung away. Its proud forts were intact now, and uninjured by cannon fire.

At Balaclava, where the vessel was made fast again to discharge and take on cargo, the old man was enchanted with the almost landlocked harbor and the green hills sloping down to it in such a friendly manner. The famous "Valley of Death," which later during the Crimean War was to be world-renowned for English bravery and the "Charge of the Light Brigade," was now merely a peaceful expanse of red and yellow poppies.

They had reached that delightfully curving bit of land which is the shore of the south, and which is dotted with semi-regal estates, where white villas shine among the orange groves, and the old man was marking his chart busily. "Alupka is as lovely as anything on the *Côte d'Azur*," he scribbled excitedly. And then he wrote right after it: "Ialta is a Russian Monaco, as far as the setting of nature goes; but the houses are very ugly. It is too bad the lovely architecture of Spain, or France, could not have been duplicated here."

For all that, Ialta was pleasure-giving. It was unlike the North. They feasted their eyes upon it.

After Ialta came Oursuf. Here Count Woronzow was building the mansion for the gay Countess, which he planned to make one of the sights of Russia, and upon which he had expended a fortune.

Near Alupka, Count Woronzow had another palace, General Raevsky remembered to note down in his diary at that instant.

Alexis Sergiewitch was just as busy in his way as the old General. He was writing, too. He was collecting together in his mind, and then arranging, his impressions of Bakshi Serai, and the gardens with the fountain. To the billowing of warm winds of spring in the sails and the inspiring song of blue water beneath him, he was writing happily and fluently.

To the east, after Oursuf, the billowing Black Sea, unmarked of land, spread clean before them. And it was in this direction they turned. Old General Raevsky was all excitement, enthusiasm. No one liked traveling better than he. They were headed directly for a new land, an Oriental land — *Caucasia;* and this gave him pleasure. To him at this period, as to every one in Russia, the word spelled danger, romance, adventure. The hand of Russia was beginning to rest heavily again upon the Caucasus. Travel here was none too safe. It was a place much talked of. What lay before them was a Promised Land, therefore, to them both.

They set foot to shore at Novorossiisk. It was a tiny group of wood and dirt houses in Pushkin's day, set in a wild amphitheater of dark, somber hills. The impression it made upon Alexis Sergiewitch was of a place sad, barren, far away, and lonely; although the spicy scent of wooded heights tingled his nostrils.

Here in the Caucasus Alexis Sergiewitch found that God had heard his prayer, *to get away.* He was, to all intents and purposes, out of Russia. A world of different language, different customs, different religions, spread around him. Nothing remembered or seen before was here.

The slightly depressing effect which the mud-plastered houses which bore the name of Novorossiisk had made upon Alexis Sergiewitch when they landed, after the bright, blue, enveloping light of the sea, was not altogether dissipated the next morning. He was disheartened, dull. Their journey, however, was not delayed. They started inland. They turned toward the southeast accompanied by a guard of Russian soldiers. The Caucasus was disturbed at present. England, they knew, was trying to stir up

the tribes all along the Persian border. Not long before, the Persians had even invaded Tiflis. Alexander was driving the Circassians of the coast out of their old quarters. He was driving them toward the Kuban, farther southeast. And that fierce Mohammedan leader, Schamyl, was making an effort to unite all the tribes, in order to have revenge by driving out the Russians. He planned to establish a kingdom here whose government was to be centralized in Daghestan. Schamyl was powerful. He was a leader of ability. Therefore their guard was not amiss. Danger might lurk at any turn.

The road led up. Soon it was so narrow they were forced to go single file. Broader and broader the land unrolled beneath them. Alexis Sergiewitch saw a luxuriant world of spring and tropic summer, with great vistas of veiled or snowy mountains shutting in the horizon. Above him were pine, fir, and hemlock, higher than his eyes could reach; beside him, blossoming anemones, violets, lilies; and in the valleys below a tropical wonderland, a world of blossoms, azaleas, white rhododendrons, pink thistles, Bengal roses, almond-trees, the white English thorn, and the blue fringed gentian. Black forests above him; and beyond the cruel, electric, blue flash of the sea. His indifference left him, face to face with wild Caucasia.

He began to join in the interest, the emotion of General Raevsky, whose fat belly made him look ridiculous, climbing these steep ascents upon a little mountain horse which all but disappeared beneath his overhanging belly. At the first level large enough to hold them comfortably, he called a halt.

"Alexis Sergiewitch," he began to discourse solemnly, "do you realize that from the height here you are looking down upon two continents? *Here* is Europe. *There* is Asia. This is one of the roofs of the world, my boy."

Each day they journeyed on now, the more remote became the wilderness, the more astonishing the circle of uplifted mountains. In their ears was the sea-like sound of wind coming across primeval forests, or the song of hidden water, or the velvet, furtive tread of wild life in the underbrush. The harmony of nature began to dominate them. How puerile were social dissensions,

restrictions! How vain the jealousies, the petty differences of opinion, that made men unhappy, and blasted their lives, when confronted with this tremendous nature! The spirit of Alexis Sergiewitch began to soar, just as he was now watching an eagle soar, above a dizzy Caucasian summit. He could see the old hemming world of his weaknesses, his boyish wrongdoing, outspread inconsequentially, like a map he had thrown away. He had risen above the past. He was serene, happy. With each day's traveling his spirit was becoming more unfettered, free.

How mighty was the power that had made the mountains bubble up and down like boiling tea-water when the *samovar* was made ready! What inconceivable force tossed up these heights, the greatest in Europe, and then cut out the round, blue seas and set them down carefully between them! They were round as the *boûbliki* which the faithful eat at Eastertide. His spirit was filled with reverence. It was as if he were approaching the throne of God. The unusual range of his nature enabled him to progress from disenchantment to ecstasy. His health returned. General Raevsky saw this. He understood that it was the effect of beauty upon the sensitive nature of an artist. But he made no remark. And not once had he referred to the past.

Around the camp-fire at night they were too tired to talk after the day's ride. They smoked in silence, listened to the tethered horses chewing their food or moving their feet, or watched the yellow flame gradually lessen its light-dance on the leaves above them. Alexis Sergiewitch loved the nights. They had a cold, pure lustration at these heights. As he watched the steady stars, which were brighter and nearer than down on the Russian Steppe, he wondered sometimes if the lovely unknown Oriental of the gardens of Bakshi Serai were perhaps journeying toward the east now, Persia, Turkey, and looking up to-night at these same stars and thinking of him. The thought held no bitterness, although he longed to see her again.

As they approached the traveled Pass, the natural bridge over the mountains which connects Asia with Europe, they met other travelers. Alexis Sergiewitch was astonished at the beauty, the grace, of these mountain people; tall, muscular, flashing-eyed

Georgians whose waists were so slender two hands could span them. They were marvelous horsemen. He had never seen any to equal them. Around camping-places they pirouetted on horseback on the edge of abysses. They were fearless. They were friends with every variety of danger. They leaped ravines, where a false step meant death. They shot, exactly in the center, silver coins tossed into the air. An interpreter enabled him to talk with them. He was surprised to find their speech embroidered with poetry. It was like the delicate, intricate pattern upon a Persian shawl. They were intelligent, witty, subtle.

The Circassians were just as handsome, too. The men wore long coats, richly galooned with gold braid, high caps set rakishly upon their heads, and gay silken shawls swathed about their flexible waists, where damascened daggers glittered. The women were even more attractive. But he looked upon them indifferently, calmly, with the appraising eye of an artist. He was amazed at the variety of people he met. It seemed to him that in no other extent of territory equally small could so many different races be found. And there was one beauty common to all these races — their eyes. He knew now what the old saying meant, "*The eyes of Asia.*"

There are two highways that lend a seeming of order to the tumbled, twisted, indeterminate mountain-world of the Caucasus: the old Caspian Road, of a time so remote it may not be dated; and the great Georgian Military Road; but neither was the fine, comparatively smooth highway of travel and commerce of a later day. The Georgian Military Road, as it is known now, was really built in 1861. Both at this date resembled mere rough pathways more suitable for the feet of mountain goats than well-kept world-highways. The Caspian Road led to Kisliar, to the east, on the shore of the Caspian Sea, and after a while down to Baku where oil had recently been found. The Georgian Road led along the Terek, over the dizzy Gorge of Dariel, past Kasbek and Elbrusz, and then connected at Jekkaterinogradskaja, with all the great highways leading to the cities of Russia. The latter, the more traveled of the two and the more important to Russia, which is the one they took, is probably the most astonishing

scenic road in the world. It leads over abysses which the eye cannot fathom, over mountains where the snow never melts, through tropical, flower-filled valleys.

When Elbrusz, the highest mountain in Europe, swung to view, with its satellite peaks, marking grandly great voids of space, it was midday. General Raevsky was almost beside himself with excitement. He declared they must pitch camp here and spend the night. "*My boy*" — his voice was trembling — "have you thought that you are now standing where perhaps was the beginning of the human race? *There*, to the southeast, not so far away — although from here we cannot see it — is Ararat, where the Ark rested after the Flood. An ancient land, this, my boy! And the people who live here will tell you that it was upon Elbrusz, yonder, that the Dove, returning to the Ark, paused to rest. The birthplace of man — *it may be* — is here."

Alexis Sergiewitch looked up reverently at the aged cone, white with snow that could never melt, and he felt suddenly that he was looking out upon a landscape, not only as ancient, but as chaotic as any landscape of the moon. It looked as worlds must look when they are born, flung forth, and first begin to be burnished by the brawling winds of space.

A few days later Kasbek was before them. This, the guide explained, was known to the people as "Christ's Mountain," just why no one could tell. But to the mountain tribes, it was sacred. The great Georgian Highway leading from Europe to Asia, along which they were traveling, passed by here. The day was clear. They saw plainly its magnificent deep, blue glaciers shining like an oblong, furrowed gem of aquamarine. From the top of the Pass, Alexis Sergiewitch saw in all directions, far away, the mighty, billowing, veiled phantoms of mountains, nameless, ageless; a sight at once grandiose and terrible.

"It was upon Kasbek," General Raevsky informed him briskly, "that the Greeks fabled Prometheus to have been chained, after he stole the fire from Heaven. So here East meets West. The old world of Asia meets the unromantic, newly scientific, upbuilding Europe."

The descent into the valley of the Terek on the other side of

the Pass was not great. It was only about fifteen hundred feet, to be exact, but it was steep, slippery, dangerous. Here, for a space, the hillsides were bare, treeless, and stony, which made the descent more impressive.

On the other side of the Pass, however, villages were more frequent. At night, when they camped here, looking out upon the wild mountain summits of Daghestan, there echoed for the first time in the ears of Alexis Sergiewitch the solemn evening prayer of Islam. They were getting ready for war, a sacred war against the infidel. Some of the men were wearing chain-armor exactly like that worn by the Crusaders, only there was no scarlet cross upon it. And the smiths were busy forging it now in many little dark forges hidden away among the hills, and daggers of beauty, upon whose hilts, or blades, was written: "*Be slow to anger, but prompt to vengeance.*"

Amid these mountains of Daghestan, which are wild and magnificent, Alexis Sergiewitch became like a little child, in wonder, in admiration. Here he met, too, a greater variety of people, and their attire was more varied, more richly hued. He saw women in wide, white pantaloons, over which were bright, swinging tunics of silk. He saw men smoking fragrant, Persian tobacco in long-stemmed, Circassian pipes. Even shepherds painted their sheep with daring splashes of orange, of yellow. There was a charm in the air. There was a charm in the sky. When he first opened his eyes in the morning, something so splendid, so inspiriting seemed to envelop both body and brain that it reminded him of primordial day. There was something about life here that must have been as it was in scriptural times, free from fictitiousness, with a certain rich heart-sincerity. General Raevsky noticed this. He agreed with him. And in the morning, too, the same, fanatical, impassioned cry of the faith of Islam, which he had heard the evening before, spread slowly like the wings of a gigantic eagle above the pointed mountains. And in his sensitive, poet's heart he trembled at sound of that fierce, all-conquering cry of the spirit.

Alexis Sergiewitch found that the little Moslem villages were made for a different life than he had known; more of meditation,

more of silence. The people did not talk, talk, like the Russians, whose tongues are never still.

General Raevsky, who was somewhat of a glutton, which did not interfere with the kindness of his heart, praised the food. They were served with roast bear's feet washed down with wines; partridges; smoked tongues of elan; milk-fed pig; jerked beef; marmalade with vinegar sauce; ragout of young lamb made with vinegar; speckled trout served with a rich sauce made of sour cream mixed with nuts; and a rich fragrant brandy called *Kisliarxa*. He ate, slept, smoked, said his prayers, declaimed eloquently for instruction of his young charge, looked about him, and was happy. He was taking heed, too, of the parting admonition of Count Woronzow: "*Take all the time you want! Do not hurry.*"

They camped by the Gorge of Dariel, that gorge so deep that it is night in its depths for some time after the sun has risen. When he climbed to any of the heights, if the day were clear, he liked to fancy that a narrow blue strip of enamel, which he could see far away between the gaunt, gashed mountains, was the Caspian Sea. Here General Raevsky caught up with his diary, while Alexis Sergiewitch wrote poetry. Here he wrote not only lyrics, but he began to sketch out a more extended piece of story-telling in verse, descriptive likewise of this journey, which he decided to name "The Prisoner of the Caucasus," a name, no doubt, suggested by another book, "Prisoners of the Caucasus," written in French by Joseph de Maistre, whom he remembered had painted the portrait of his graceful, creole mother, and which now hung in the old town home in Moscow. Among such favorable surroundings, solitude, the snowy summits of lonely mountains, the voice of the great river which shook the night, the somber song of ancient forests, and the friendly, generous-spirited man with whom he was traveling, it was finished speedily.

From Piatigorsk, where the hot sulphur springs and the modern hotels are, he sent the manuscript on to Petersburg. With it he sent a letter to his long-neglected friend, Schukowsky, telling briefly of his experiences in the South and how he had learned to know two English poets, Byron and Shelley. The latter, he ex-

plained, was a free-thinker. After reading him he did not know but that he had become one, too. About the Caucasus he would say nothing, because the verse he was sending on to be printed would tell the story.

The journey of General Raevsky and himself up to now had been in the same general direction in which the Circassian people were being driven by Russia, south and east. Now it was changed.

From Piatigorsk they began to turn slightly north and west. Winter could not be spent in the semi-shelterless, wild Caucasia, where snows were heavy and frequent. Autumn was bearing down upon them. They had both felt it sensitively and without wishing to mention it. For both there was a measure of grief in the fact.

One morning after they passed Novogeorgevsk, where the sunny air about them was like liquid amber, they found they stood upon the last height of the somber Caucasian range. General Raevsky pointed sadly to vague blue levels below them and to northward. Here huge circling coils shone, which the old man told him a little sadly were the great rivers of Russia, the Don and the Volga.

"There, my boy — *look* — there where the mountains fade into the plain — that is Russia. There our journey, our happy companionship ends." The sight saddened Alexis Sergiewitch. He wished impetuously that it could be made to last forever. "Cheer up, my boy! We are not there yet."

Alexis Sergiewitch looked down upon the awkward, fat, emotional figure beside him, and a wave of love, of gratitude for this man, who had given him so many months of calm and reasonable living, when he had possessed creative power, surged within him.

"It is a great country, my boy — over there — *our Russia!* Something to be proud of. *A great country, did I say?* Why, it covers half the earth. And Russia is going to be proud of you, some day — I feel it. I know it. Never lose courage — *my boy!*"

CHAPTER XVII

ALEXANDER

When Alexander reached Petersburg, after overhearing the frank disclosure of the infidelities of Marie Antonova which had taken place between Count Orlow and the scornful Viazemsky, and after seeing her in the arms of the handsome Schuvalow in the honeysuckle arbor, he sat in his cabinet a night and a day, without sleeping, without changing his apparel, or seeming to take notice of anything. He gave orders to admit no one. He did not glance toward his accumulated papers. He did not open his dispatches. He forgot his duties. Food was carried to him. He ate only bread and fruit, and little of that. He washed it down with water.

He sat rigid and white, looking straight ahead, as if he were made of stone, but seeing nothing. The servants who answered his bell hastened to report that there was something "queer" about the Emperor, but they did not know how to tell what it was. They agreed that he did not appear like himself. They whispered cautiously to each other that "*he looked as if he had lost his mind.*"

Like the earthquake, swift, unannounced, which topples over tall buildings of masonry and then lays bare the hidden heart of the earth, the disclosure had come. It had not only shocked him, but it had torn loose and then uprooted the protecting, hidden fibers of being. He had loved Marie Antonova tenderly, and for a period of years. She was interwoven with the happy, care-free days of his young manhood. He had trusted her. More, the mere thought that she could be unfaithful to him had not occurred to him. He believed she loved him in return just as he loved her. All the serene, peaceful, home life, with its ensuing happiness, which he had known had been with her. There had really been no happy family life, with its little foolish but necessary pleasures, for him to look back upon when he had been a

child and lived with his grandmother at court. Life there had been secure, triumphant, splendid, a kind of continual pageant. In his own home his father had been a wild-tempered, unreasoning madman. There had been trouble, excitement, danger there. So this life with Marie Antonova had supplied the need of his nature. Its love had given him the heart-warmth, the courage to go on, and the necessary human background. She was a part of the happy memories of youth.

And hers was no weak, no accidental stepping from right, to be overlooked or forgiven great-heartedly. It had been deliberate. It had been planned throughout the years — and not with one — but with many. There had been no regard to station in life, no regard for decency of any kind. She had lived like any woman of the street. She was another Orsini. He had lived with her, protected her, loved her, through the best years of his life and not known it. He had given her the best of himself. He had made life for her something delightful, to be envied. She was vile. She was contemptible. And he had not suspected it. Her baseness shocked him. The knowledge filled him with suffering. It shattered his sustaining courage. In baseness she surpassed any woman of whom he had heard. It was baseness unprovoked — of independent choosing. It was something her nature required and sought. There was no other view to take of it.

Just as his daughter had recast the past after she saw Count Schuvalow enter her mother's room at night, and had then interpreted things that puzzled her in the truthful light of acquired knowledge, Alexander began to do the same. And the scenes that occurred to the two were surprisingly similar. He understood now the feigned excuse of riding daily to reduce her flesh; the late and later hours at which she had returned from these rides, with the glibly plausible but now foolish excuses. How could he have believed them at the time? What faith was his! He understood various extraordinary, and to him unreasonable, attacks of ill temper, of sulkiness, which he had regarded indulgently at the moment, as little human inequalities, and then made futile efforts to please her, usually by some dazzling gift. He remembered feeling how angry she had been that night when

Lasky was playing, and he had entered the box, and how she had refused to speak or even to look at him when he took her home in the carriage. Sophie had been sad that night. She had looked up at him wistfully, sympathetically, with great, tragic eyes. Could it be that she had suspected something, and he alone had been blind? Could it be possible that she had tried to conceal her mother's wrongdoing to save him from suffering! It was then that her health changed so suddenly for the worse, he remembered. It was clear enough now. Probably the only thing of interest to Lasky had been the triumph, and the ensuing professional advertisement for himself, of having taken away the Emperor's mistress, *Lasky!* At the theater that night she and Lasky had been playing the real comedy, while amused Petersburg looked on and applauded. And he was the one who paid for it!

There was the day of the Art Exhibit. Very likely every one of the intimate palace circle who had been present had had an idea as to where she was when they waited for her so long — except himself. He alone was the dupe. He recalled now how intently Count Orlow and Prince Viazemsky had scrutinized her when they stood by the door ready to go to the carriage. They had looked her over appraisingly from head to toe. Even Viazemsky, whose wit sometimes had such a flexible, such a feline cruelty, and whom he disliked, probably pitied him then. And she had been cross that day, too. Vernet's eloquent canvas "Mazeppa," which he had been looking at just before Marie Antonova entered, flashed upon his super-active memory. He, Alexander, was another Mazeppa, a royal one, bound helpless to destiny — whom the wolves of ingratitude, betrayal, envy, were following to destroy.

He understood now why she was determined she would not leave the city when summer came. And he had yielded to her, let her go on, thereby endangering his daughter's health. The city gave her opportunities of freedom, which were denied her, alone with him, upon a country estate.

In what moral filth had he been living all his days, he who had longed to be Christ's depositary of power, and to restore peace to the nations! He who had longed to right the wrongs of man

throughout the ages! He had been right on a level with the petty butcher's clerk whose wife betrays him for a new pair of red morocco shoes. The sickening horror of it! The futile disgust! The sad regret! His intimate family life had not been one whit superior. He could not think of any man's that had been so vile. The life he had lived with her all these years, which had made him happy and contented, had been an enormous, constantly growing wrong. He had not only deceived himself, but others had worked to deceive him, because they believed the undeceiving would make him suffer. It was more than painful, this waking up to find things the opposite of what he thought them. It was something huge, impalpable, with which to contemplate dealing. It shook the soul of him.

Sophie — his beloved daughter! Did she know? If she did not, and if she were not trying to protect him, why had she begged him to send the saddle horses to the meadow? And the time she chose to do it was in the morning, while Marie Antonova was asleep. They were sent before she came downstairs. That was a defensive measure evidently which she had thought out. In what a rage Marie Antonova had been when she found they were gone! She had remained in her room and sulked an entire day. And he had suspected nothing! How could he have been so blind?

Why had Sophie begged him, too, to keep her mother in the country as long as possible? It was not for her own health. It was to keep Marie Antonova out of trouble. It was to avoid fresh scandal. Why had she whispered to him to go there as speedily as possible? She knew. She was trying to protect him.

And there was the wedding to confront! That was a new horror. It must be confronted bravely, without loss of time. Marie Antonova's *liaison* with Count Schuvalow was base beyond comprehension; even knowing it, it was hard to believe. She had fought for the engagement merely to facilitate her relations with Schuvalow and place them beyond the range of suspicion.

It must be stopped. What a scandal there would be, not only in Russia, but throughout the Continent, when he called it off! How could he explain, with any show of reason, a change so great, so sudden? Sophie would not care! It would come as re-

lief to her. He was glad of that. What veiled, bitter caricatures the humorous publications of England, of France, would have! Those of England would fall heavily, like the blow of a club. Those of France would sting deeply and smart for months afterward. Both would make him sad. Both would increase the range of his suffering. It was an unequaled opportunity for the wits. They would not miss it. What a figure he must have cut, to those who knew, on the night of the announcement party — in the great glowing Narischkin Palace — when the presents he had given his daughter were displayed! What scornful, merry remarks must have been whispered! And he had permitted this woman to bring up the daughter he adored. He was grieved. He was humiliated, beyond the power of retaliatory thought.

The disclosure had as many shining, different facets of thought as the sun finds when it strikes the ocean's surface. These flashing thought-facets blinded, confused, annoyed him. They sent their barbed arrows of bitter comprehension to all the vulnerable, unprotected places of his nature. With one there was mingled surprise, with another fresh shame. With another the forgotten but not healed surface of some ancient wound. With his unusual knowledge of the human heart, he had not been able to fathom hers, it seemed. She had mystified him just as he had mystified the world. His ability to read the hearts of men was something profound. It was an unusual, an unguessed superiority. It had helped to make him suspicious. It had destroyed his faith in humanity. It had shaken his pleasure in friendship, in society. It was, perhaps, a gift of genius. Like such gifts it brought with it the usual fatal, not to be separated attribute. And the one time it had failed him, in the case of Marie Antonova, had been rich in destructive results. The happiness of most people, he understood, depends upon their inability to see and to think. Alexander had always been able to think. Now he was facing the unsparing light that comes with seeing.

His yielding, generous nature, in the slow course of years, had made a monster out of her; a monster of selfishness and vanity; of sinful folly. He saw how much more dangerous to the social structure is a spoiled woman than a spoiled child. He saw how

much more widespread is the wrong dealt out. He supposed nobility must call forth nobility, just as flame, flame. But in her there had been no corresponding fiber of fineness, of gratitude. There was nothing there to call out. Humanly speaking, she had not progressed that far. His persistent kindness had been merely a superb kind of folly, a superior way of wasting. It had been the planting of seeds of love upon the desert. He had builded his dwelling upon the sands where it is not permitted to build. Therefore, the tides had come and had washed it away. Life, as he had lived it, had been a masterpiece of wrong seeing, of false thinking. He was humiliated.

Visualizing memory now showed him a different Marie Antonova *physically*. He looked at her with the same discriminating, disillusioned eyes with which his daughter had looked across the dinner table at her that fatal night when she had watched Count Schuvalow come from her mother's room in the dawn. She was bold. She was vulgar — and commonplace of mind. She looked like a courtesan — not a woman of birth, of refinement. Hard, abusive names, which not for anything would he have uttered, unused as he was to such words, floated of their own will across the surface of his mind. He was surprised to see how they fitted her. And he who had been summoned of God to rule the earth's greatest empire had been tricked by this second-rate woman. The mouse had moved the mountain.

Among these surging and rebellious memories, the one that disgusted him most, and that recurred oftenest, was a certain expression her face, her eyes, had kept, the day of the Art Exhibit, when she had hurried unwillingly, he knew, to him, straight from the arms of Lasky.

If he had been baser, he would have suspected her, found her out quicker in the past, and he could have found some consolation in the present in dreaming of, or in planning, revenge. But revenge was something outside the circumference of that fine, that generous life-ideal which was his. He possessed too high a degree of intelligence to think of revenge.

Metternich occurred to him, as he frequently did in times of trouble, because of the sustaining sense of strength that states-

man gave him. He thought of Metternich now. *He knew*, of course, because all the world knew, except himself. He had warned him of many things — why had he not warned him of Marie Antonova? Metternich had usually been ready enough to increasee his distrust of any friend. It was Metternich who stirred up ill-feeling between him and Napoleon. It was he, too, who first made him suspicious of Russia's band of young poets and who had insisted that they be checked. The Austrian was an adroit mischief-maker. He had never before shown any hesitancy in pointing out new boundaries of evil in the heart of man. Why had he hesitated here? It must be that the reason he had not warned him was because, when Alexander was with Marie Antonova, he thought he was *safely employed.* He believed the time well squandered, *for him, Metternich.*

Yet he felt no ill-will toward this capable statesman. Almost all the hours he had spent, whose happiness was pure and unblemished, which were free from the pin-pricks of disturbing thoughts, had been with that charming diplomatist. His happinesses were too few to discount them recklessly. He clung to them now as the hungry cling to a crust. That seductive smile upon the lips of Alexander, which had played such a part in the restless history of the last few years, was gone. And forever. Not again was it seen in the old flexible grace. This smile had been variously effective. It had made his slightest word of weight. It had not only ensnared the hearts of women, the masses, and the credulous public, but it had made its influence felt in affairs of state. It had held captive fickle France when he had ridden at the head of a triumphing army through the streets of Paris. One glance at it had melted the none too easily won heart of Napoleon. It even touched the dull-fibered, self-sufficient Wellington. When he had gone to Verona to meet Metternich on that memorable occasion, it had kept crowds waiting eagerly in the streets, to look upon it again. For a period, until suffering and disillusion had begun to dim it, it had matched the guile of Metternich. There was something different, very strange, about it now. There was something that suggested the fixed, but spasmodically recurring, momentum of

madness, the reflex of a piece of human mechanism that had been roughly broken.

He was not sure whether automatically, impelled by habit, he had answered the ringing of the bell, or if the door had been opened without his signal. However it may have been, Photius stood before him. Alexander did not this time bow his head first, gracefully, yieldingly, in greeting to the priest, while awaiting the priest's tardy blessing. He sat at his desk and looked straight at him, with eyes which seemed to be uncentered.

Photius was surprised. He intended to insist as usual upon the homage which he considered his due. He did not intend to yield. But the look disconcerted Photius. And the figure in elegant evening attire, the throat swathed with fine cambric, a wilted flower in the buttonhole, with the white, grieved, insensitive face of the dead, all bore witness to something out of the ordinary, and helped to disconcert him more. Something *serious* was wrong. He began to feel uncomfortable. Then he felt out of place. At length he wished that he had not come.

Here was a new Alexander whom evidently he could not browbeat, whose seduction of manner was gone, and who did not care greatly about anything. He took a seat awkwardly in one of the chairs opposite the desk, and facing the window. He began to speak somewhat more limply than usual, but he was still disagreeable and ready to become contradictory. His hair did not look as if it had ever been combed. His robe was dirty.

"I have just learned of Your Majesty's return." The figure opposite did not reply. He felt the weight of its indifference.

"I hastened to see Your Majesty because I thought perhaps Your Majesty had not been informed — how the Turks are murdering, and then mutilating, the priests of our faith — *in Greece.* The infidels have followed them into the temples. They have desecrated the altars with blood — while Your Majesty has been resting — *and enjoying yourself* — by the Gulf of Finland." He was not able to tell whether the figure opposite was listening, or just looking at him without listening. The eyes were looking through him — beyond him — at something he could not see. They were beginning to make him angry.

"As head of the Greek Church," he began stiffly, intending to make his displeasure felt quickly, "it is Your Majesty's duty to lead a holy war — for the extermination of the Turk. It is your duty — *I repeat*" — his voice rising disagreeably now, and expressing the anger behind it — "to drive him out of Europe. Russia is crying for you to avenge the faith. Russia is waiting for you — *wondering what is wrong* —" From the usual fluent mouth of Photius words were beginning to come, slowly, lamely. The silence of the figure opposite was so disconcerting. Opposition he could meet and struggle with. In fact, he liked it. He sought it. But with this he did not know what to do. "If you do not — Your Majesty — God will punish you — as I warned you once. Now I warn you again." Still there was no answer.

"God will take away from you the things you love! God will not permit so great a wrong — which you have not lifted a finger to help — you, who alone could stop it —"

His voice began to sound in his ears like the vain wailing of the wind, in some deserted house where no one comes. It frightened him.

Suddenly Photius paused. Something that resembled fear began to creep over him. He was a coward. He did not know now but some unthought-of ill was threatening himself. That was sufficient to modify his conduct. He could not, like his good friend Arakcheiev, find strength and comfort in counting objects, in making infinite additions. He did not have anything so reliable as figures to fall back upon. He contemplated his long dirty finger-nails for a while. Then he looked wisely at his unkempt hands. Words had failed him. He could not find any new point of attack. He arose and slipped out the door by which he had entered, with something of the same gesture with which a stoned dog slinks away. In the anteroom without he did not find any one who was willing to talk with him. There was no one who could or would explain. He was obliged to leave the building without his usual, collected budget of gossip, to distribute wherever he felt that it would make the most trouble. But there was one thing he could do, and that was to make the most of the strange appearance of the Emperor, for the Emperor's discredit,

his undoing. His father had been forced from the throne! What had been done once could be done again.

He had barely time to round the corner of the huge piece of masonry which was the palace, and gain the open street beyond, when a messenger from the Gulf of Finland, who had evidently ridden at speed, judging from the condition of his horse, demanded admittance.

The messenger bowed. He handed Alexander a letter. It was written by the English governess at the command of Marie Antonova. It said that Sophie Narischkin was dead; and that they were starting that morning for Petersburg with the body, in order that Alexander might arrange the details for the funeral. It named an hour at which they expected to reach the Narischkin Palace. On her own account the governess added the information that she herself and the English nurse were leaving for Riga that day, also by order of Marie Antonova, from which place they would set out for their home in England. Alexander, with a wild gesture of the arm, waved the messenger away. The door closed. He was alone. He bent his head upon the desk. And he whom no one had seen show any mark of violent emotion sobbed aloud: "*The curse of Photius is fulfilled! The wages of sin is death.*"

The God who punished him had also solved the problem that confronted him. There was no wedding to be avoided now. There was no difficult double living to confront, in seeing his daughter as usual, and not seeing Marie Antonova. There was no daughter for whom it was his duty to arrange a different, a safer place of residence. His relations with Marie Antonova were severed. The death of Sophie Narischkin had wiped out the past. The slate was clean. It was ready for beginning over again. It was ready for the beginning of another life.

Another life! He was bounding back from the depths of the abyss of grief. He started at the thought. The shock was considerable. It was one, too, of combined grief and gladness. *another life!* What astonishing, vast thought was that. He had a tantalizing, impotent vision of unmeasured space with its worlds of revolving light. Another life? Could man have more than one? Especially could this be possible if he had used the first one

futilely? Half of his own allotted space of days was gone already. Would God prolong it? Would He give to him what He did not give to others? Would He give him space for another upon earth? Could He grant the trying over again! And might it be somewhere else — in some fresh place — *world forgotten* — unmarred by bitter memories?

Then that sea of grief whose surging was not stilled swept over him again, and he cried aloud in his agony: "*The wages of sin is death!*"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE RETURN

After they had left the mountains behind, now become merely rows of ash-colored billows growing dimmer and dimmer, descended into the steppe, and were well across the Don Cossack country, the high spirits and the happiness of Alexis Sergiewitch began to decrease. The old man saw the peculiar sadness growing upon him. He did not know just how to set about hindering it. He sensed rightly enough that the foundation was fear, of some kind. Without mentioning the subject directly, he did what he could to dissipate it.

"You have seen a good bit of Russia — in the last few years, my boy — *now, have n't you?*" The quick, sympathetic response he expected was not forthcoming. "You have traveled the length and breadth of it, not to mention Crimea and the Caucasus. Even if Alexander will not permit young men to go to France, to Italy, *just now*, it is better to travel the way you have than not at all, *now, is n't it?*"

Alexis Sergiewitch was grateful to the kindly nature that was trying to warm him back to happiness. "Oh! — I have been happy *with you!* But what is to become of me now? Am I free, or am I not? My own wishes, of course, or what I deserve have nothing to do with the question," he added dully.

General Raevsky, too, was expecting daily some word from Count Woronzow. He could not see any reason why Alexis Sergiewitch should not be set free. All this young fellow needed was the proper treatment. In his opinion, which he did not dare to express, however, it was ridiculous to keep him subjected to restraint.

They did not have to wait long. At the first post station, after they reached the old Yekkaterinoslav Highway, a messenger from Count Woronzow awaited them. He handed General Raevsky a sealed document. The old gentleman made the sign

of the cross over it twice before opening it. It contained the information that a letter which Alexis Sergiewitch had sent from Piatigorsk did not reach the person to whom it was addressed. It was opened, read, and the information it contained sent to Count Woronzow and likewise to Petersburg. The information was that Alexis Sergiewitch had forsworn the Orthodox Russian faith, and proclaimed that he was an atheist.

Count Woronzow added the remark that the generous heart of Alexander would forgive, as was his habit, a lack of respect toward the throne, but he could not overlook lack of reverence toward the faith. In this decision of the Emperor he, Count Woronzow, concurred heartily.

The unlucky letter written by Alexis Sergiewitch had reached Petersburg at an unpropitious moment. The subject of religion happened to be up for discussion. The zeal of French *émigrés*, preaching Catholicism, had converted many of the upper class to the faith of France. This disturbed the zealots. There was a spirited dispute in progress between Photius and Alexander, because Prince Galitzin, Governor of Moscow, had gone over to the Jesuits. Photius was demanding the old man's punishment and the burning of Jesuit property in Russia. He was foaming with rage and the zeal of persecution. The news of Pushkin's letter fell on top of this like fat on fire. Photius insisted upon the mines for him, or the Monastery of Solovetz — for life. He pointed out, aptly enough, that lesser punishment had been tried, and it had failed. At this moment nothing could have been more unfortunate for Alexis Sergiewitch. His Majesty, Count Woronzow went on to explain, in the mercy of his heart, instead of punishing, merely requested young Alexis Sergiewitch to return to the family estate, Mikhailovsky. Here he was to be under the supervision of the village police, the Archimandrite of the nearest cloister, and his father, whose right-mindedness was unquestioned. He was not to leave the estate unless permission was first obtained from Petersburg.

This piece of news fell like a thunderbolt out of a blue sky.

"What did you write, my boy?" gasped the little old man.

"Nothing — that I can recall now — *plainly*. Nothing of

importance. I think I said I had been reading an English poet, named Shelley, and that he seemed to be an atheist. Afterward I may have made some remark to the effect that if there was not much comfort in such thoughts there might be some truth. But the memory is hazy, because I did not attribute importance to it. I do recall that I closed by saying that we were now on the way back, and that I had sent a story in verse called 'Prisoner of the Caucasus,' on to Peter to be printed. That was all."

"To whom was the letter addressed?"

"My old friend, Schukowsky, the poet."

"And it never reached him! May the saints protect you!" he exclaimed, dropping down upon a chair where he began to cross himself rapidly, while his fat belly shook. "There is nothing in the world that would anger Woronzow like that!"

Alexis Sergiewitch was so disheartened he could not speak. They sat in silence looking solemnly across at each other. Alexis Sergiewitch recalled with a shudder the lightly spoken words of Countess Woronzow in Odessa: "*Photius is demanding your death of Alexander!*" He did not repeat the words to the old man. The horror of it, to his excitable nature, held his tongue tied. But it came back to him with the force of a blow.

He began to regret bitterly that he had not run away when he was in the Caucasus and the opportunity to do so was good. From there, the home of fugitives, he could have made his escape safely. He could have reached, at length, France, Italy, and not been caught. There he could have been free, happy, like other men. He exclaimed aloud at length: "The Devil surely must have been in me to be born in Russia — *and with talent!*" They regarded each other sympathetically. They both understood what it meant.

"After you look at it a little, my boy, it is n't really so bad as it seemed at first," ventured the old man, by nature an optimist. "It is the work of some trouble-making spy — of course. There is envy in it, too! But I feel, at the same time, that Alexander has done this to protect you. *I know him!* I was in the war with him. No one is kinder at heart. He is placing you in imprisonment at home, to save you from the anger of *some one* who is

pursuing you. Instead of being sad, my boy, be thankful! You know that Count Benkendorf, Arakcheiev, and Photius are always at his ear now."

Alexis Sergiewitch did know this. Yet he could not share on the moment the older man's conciliatory view. He was too grieved. His sense of injury was too great.

"The trouble with us, my boy," he was trying to observe cheerfully, "is that we are hungry. Now do you not think so? I will order a good meal. What do you say to some sturgeon, or jellied partridge, or roast wild boar's head stuffed with herbs? We *might* get some of that white wine of Crimea here, too. Or would you rather have a sparkling French wine? Say, Burgundy? I am willing to leave it to you."

The table was served by two good-looking young *moujiks*. They wore belted tunics, bouffant trousers, and they had blond beards.

Food, well cooked and well chosen, was beginning to have its customary effect upon the old gourmand, when Alexis Sergiewitch was summoned sharply and told to start. General Raevsky was affected by the harshness of the order. Protest he knew, however, would be useless. He did not attempt it.

"Keep up courage, my boy! Never forget that what Alexander does is for your good." Then he blessed him, made the sign of the cross over his blond head, and sat down to finish his lonely meal, while Alexis Sergiewitch went whirling away in the dusk, across the sad autumn country, toward Mikhailovsky. All that night his mind was tortured by two questions so he could not rest. *What was it I wrote in that letter? Why did I not escape from Russia when I had the chance?* He felt helpless like a mouse over which the cat's paw is suspended.

The father of Alexis Sergiewitch, Sergius Lvovitch, was a *grand seigneur*, a courtier, after the manner of the preceding century, which was that of France. His education was wholly French. He even spoke Russian badly, he used it so infrequently, and so infrequently came into personal contact with his serfs. Nothing could have induced him to read a Russian book because the language was not made to read in. His mind was devoted to society, to pleasure.

Sergius Lvovitch was not bound to the soil that supported him either by sufficient love or sense of duty. He suffered from lack of serious occupation either political or economic. His days were filled with folly. He had neither plan nor ambition for his estates, his serfs. He had no ideal in life of any kind except pleasure. Circumstances had made of him a superfluity. The social exquisites of France before the *Terreur* were brave. They could meet death with a smile. These Russian exquisites, being merely an imitation, were different. They were of a slighter moral stature. They were merely toys of life. They cannot command the same respect. Sergius Lvovitch had the fine if insincere manners of the period that was past, and a proud and aristocratic bearing. He had rather a noble head, although the features were a trifle of the rough blond Russian type. Yet he resembled considerably certain miniatures of the period of Louis Seize. And he still wore, on most occasions, the old court garb of France, or one that was a slight modification of it. He had that lack of love, of enduring affection for his children, that sometimes characterizes *roués* grown old, who have recognized no duties in life, who persist in hanging on to the last ragged fringe of pleasure, who find children in the way, and usually irrelevant. In addition, Sergius Lvovitch was lazy. He did not like to be disturbed about anything that was foreign to his personal well-being.

For the last year or two eloquent if exaggerated accounts of the misdemeanors of his son and namesake had been reaching him rather frequently. Naughty, scornful jingles one could not forget, bitter epigrams about people of position, sometimes his own friends, had been repeated to him. That his son should have love-affairs, duel a little, incur gambling debts, was natural. That was part of the life of a young man of society. But that he should cherish revolutionary or unorthodox thoughts, or proclaim them, associate with people out of his social class, and, worst of all, incur the displeasure of a man of such high position, both *socially* and *politically*, as Count Woronzow, were outside the range of his comprehension.

The books of verse his son had been publishing rapidly the past few years, he knew were rot. He did not take the trouble to

look at them. Besides, *why* should a *gentleman* write verse? The fact that he had run away and lived with the gypsies made him so angry that he all but lost his breath whenever he thought of it.

Here came the last straw. He had been stricken from the list of *employés* of the Foreign Office. This automatically wiped out his salary, also hope for future promotion. He was nobody now. He belonged nowhere. And what an opportunity to throw away, *with Woronzow!* And now he, Sergius Lvovitch, must be answerable for him! A pretty kettle of fish! The household under surveillance of the village police! What a disgrace! What an injustice to a man like him! He had been planning, as usual, for a winter of social diversion in Moscow. Sergius Lvovitch was always more or less ill-tempered when he was forced to remain upon one of his country estates any length of time. This meant being away from balls, gossip, the discreet flirtations of his age, the occasional sentimental recollecting of the past, the news, the romances of Paris, dinner-parties, cards, which alone spelled life for him. With bitter wit he murmured to himself: "Children are surely a blessing in disguise. And in my case the disguise becomes harder and harder to penetrate."

The country home, Mikhailovsky, resembled the majority of Russian country places. It was a typical manor house of long ago. A large, rambling, two-storied wooden structure, with adjoining one-storied sub-buildings, out-buildings. It stood end to the road. The broad face of the building looked out upon a good-sized pond, plentifully stocked with fish, some little distance away. Beyond the pond was a heavy windmill that creaked sharply in the wind. Still beyond, a humble peasant village, and still beyond that bare, limitless fields. At one end of the pond stood a grove of fir-trees, thick, well grown. On the broad highway, which connected them with the world outside and which had to make a sharp turn in order to pass the long side of the house and the front door, were three tall, imposing pines, growing close together. A somewhat ambitious flower garden was in front of this side of the house, too, and across the road. Here ragged pinks grew in summer, in profusion.

In the house there was noticeable diversity of furnishing.

There was a drawing-room in tarnished gold and faded tapestry. There was a marble mantel in the room whereon stood a porcelain nymph and a blushing shepherd boy. In one corner was a French spinet, that stood on three legs. There was a library walled with glass doors where the books were wholly French: Voltaire, the Encyclopédistes, Molière, the poems of Béranger, Saint-Simon, Marquis de Crecqui, the naughty stories of Crébillon, a *Bibliotheque Amoureuse*, which was in all Russian houses of the better class, and a book of *galanteries* from the Bible. In the other rooms there were pieces of rough furniture made by their peasants; coarse, reed-bottomed chairs and tables put together with pegs; a combination, in short, of rusticity and faded splendor. Neither Sergius Lvovitch nor his wife Nadezhda Nicolaevna paid much attention to their inherited estates, except spending the incomes from them, and demanding more and more money from their stewards, to whom they delegated care. They did not pay more attention to their children. They were chiefly concerned in seeing that they were annoyed by them just as little as possible. They gave them over to nurses and a governess. That ended it.

When Alexis Sergiewitch drove up to the door, it was just after the midday meal had been served. His father came out to meet him. He did not say a word. This was a bad symptom. He knew that silence on the part of Sergius Lvovitch, from whose lips words rippled during his waking hours like the water of a brook, argued ill. Sergius Lvovitch ordered the man who accompanied him to drive to the village, and there to inform the police that Alexis Sergiewitch had arrived, and likewise to inform the Archimandrite of the cloister. Also would he be good enough to ask them to call at their earliest convenience, to decide upon what should be done with the prisoner? Evidently Sergius Lvovitch took his deputed duty as jailer seriously.

Fresh flame had been added to the fatherly wrath of Sergius Lvovitch by the personal appearance of Alexis Sergiewitch. His clothes were dirty. They were ragged, too. They were the same clothes in which he had slept out of doors for months in the Caucasus. His hair was long. It looked rough. His face was tanned,

unshaven, and burned until it was three shades darker than his hair. His hands were uncared-for. His shoes were full of holes. In short, he was just a vagabond, a tramp. The old, perfumed, cambric-shirted courtier looked at him with unconcealed contempt. *This, his son!*

Within, in the old-fashioned living-room, furnished in black walnut and green cotton rep, on whose walls ascetic, sad-faced icons jostled questionable, merry color-prints from France, the family were assembled to greet him. Arína Rodiónovna, his nurse, folded him in her arms and wept. His delicate, picturesque mother embraced him languidly, without either love or reproach. The dark eyes of his sister Olga regarded him with frank sisterly love. His brother Leo was not at home.

"*My pet* — are you hungry? What shall I bring you to eat?" questioned Arína Rodiónovna, anxiously, just as when he was a little boy.

"*He does n't need to eat!*" thundered Sergius Lvovitch. "Let him wait."

No one dared to speak. Sergius Lvovitch was showing symptoms of a tantrum.

At that moment the dressmaker, who was putting the finishing touches to Madam Pushkin's winter wardrobe for Moscow, entered humbly. She brought a blue velvet trained gown, trimmed with white swan's down. "If you please — I would inquire of Madam —"

A gesture from Sergius Lvovitch closed her mouth. Another gesture sent her scampering away like a frightened rabbit, the long dress trailing behind her.

"Shut that door!" he commanded. The family looked at each other with inquiring eyes. "I suppose you have come to accompany us to Siberia, *have n't you?*" — bending upon Alexis Sergiewitch a look of wrath.

Arína Rodiónovna began to wipe her eyes.

"I do not know what you mean, sir."

"Well, you 'll find out — *soon enough!* This house — I would inform you, *because of you*, is under police surveillance. Do you know what that means? If we have any enemies (*and who has*

not?) we shall go to Siberia. That's the way such things end. And if we *should happen* — to escape that, your bad reputation has ruined your brother's prospects in life — and probably your sister's too." He glanced wrathfully in the direction of the sister it was his duty to marry to some one, or else provide for.

"I have not done anything wrong, sir — I assure you. Nothing to be imprisoned for — to be reproved, like this," he replied hoping to calm his father by his own restraint.

"Silence!"

"I just wish to explain. I merely wrote a letter to Schukowsky, from Piatigorsk, telling him, because he is a friend of mine, that we were on our way back from the Caucasus. In that letter, too, I happened to refer to the fact that I had read Shelley and that he was an atheist. There was not a word about the government, nor about any official."

"Well — what do you want to write letters for, anyway? Have you lost your tongue?" His conciliatory explanation was of slight avail. "You have ruined your family — with your evil life —"

He was beginning to work himself up into one of his frenzies. The listeners looked at each other helplessly. Arína Rodiónovna was standing behind the chair of his mother. From under her high cap, now a little awry, she was looking at him with pitying eyes. His sister Olga was frightened. He knew how scenes distressed her. It was plain that she did not know what to do, but he knew her heart was with him. He was impressed, on the instant, by the expression upon the face of his creole mother. He felt that she touched life so lightly, so like a feather, that no grief, no reproach of others could reach her. While her body was there near them, she lived somewhere far away, in a world of her own. She sat silent, probably indifferent as usual, a smile half scornful, half plaintive, upon her lips, and her large gray eyes, where the white showed so pronouncedly, in some unreachable, far reverie where she was happy. It was just this, probably, that had always been able to stem successfully his father's torrent of words.

"What a life I am leading! *What a life!*" Sergius Lvovitch

was moaning, losing self-control more and more. "Buried half the year in this accursed hole! Bored to death! Burdened with responsibility — *care* — everything works against me! *Everything!* Even the cattle — the steward — This year the ewes insisted upon lambing just at the time a box of new novels reached me from Paris. *Why* could they not have waited — *say, a week?* Whenever for a moment I was beginning to be happy — whenever I was beginning to forget this accursed country life — the steward sent a man to tell me how many new lambs I had. As if that made any difference *to me* — in comparison with what I was reading! And now your mother and I were planning for a little diversion — it would be better to say *well-earned* diversion — after our hard-working summer here — in Moscow. And along you come! *What a life!* What a life!" Sergius Lvovitch was on the verge of tears. "I can't stand any more now. Take him to his room — *out of my sight.*"

He signaled Arína Rodiónovna. His mother got up with suspicious haste to join her dressmaker. Olga went to the lonely drawing-room to practice on the painted spinet. Sergius Lvovitch put on his riding-boots, in order to relieve his anger by a spirited gallop across the pale, autumn country.

He had not ridden far before he began to feel better. He was riding a new horse. Just yesterday the village shoemaker had brought the long riding-boots made under his personal supervision. In them the calf of his leg looked something as he thought a calf should look. He began to talk aloud, for talk he must, if not to people, then to space.

"Sacrifices are bad — *of course.* But still sacrifices have to be made. And that is not any fault of mine. It is better for *one* — than for many — *a family*, say. Besides — to have a member of the family devoting his life to the church — in case there *is* anything in religion — might bring unexpected good to the rest. If Alexis Sergiewitch were placed, say, *for life*, in the Monastery of Solovetz — he would be safe. He would be out of the way. He would be where he would not cost me any more money — Alexander would approve of it. *So would Woronzow!* It would make peace at once in high places — *for the family.* It seems

to me the thing to do. To have a son in the church brings a family about the same amount of *social* approbation as to have one in the navy or army," he rambled on.

When five days later, the police and the Archimandrite came, Sergius Lvovitch spent a day that was almost happy. They consumed together many small, round, yellow, raisin-dotted cakes and countless glasses of tea. He used their receptive intelligence as a kind of large blotting-paper, to receive and then soak up his vast overflow of words. They listened. They applauded. They sympathized with him. He orated. He became eloquent to the point of tears. He quoted Molière and the Bible, his two stanchest authorities, to brace up his statements. They assured him time and again of his unshakable loyalty to church and state. And in the end they agreed about Alexis Sergiewitch. They would place him in solitary confinement, permit him to have no visitors, and forbid him to read or write. The Archimandrite signified his willingness to come over at stated intervals, as seemed best to him, to inquire into the conditions of his soul. Then, *later*, they would take up the question of committing him for life, to the Monastery of Solovetz.

That night, after the household were in bed and asleep, his sister Olga tiptoed to the door of his room. She told him about the afternoon conference and what had been said. She had overheard her father telling it over again to her mother.

The next morning, Alexis Sergiewitch arose early. He sought his father's room. He found that elderly, dissipated beau in bed and not too pleased to be awakened. There was a French novel under his pillow. Evidently he had read late. He seldom arose, however, before midday. He often ate his breakfast in bed.

"I have come, father, to make an appeal to you."

"Don't you dare call me father — *you antichrist!*"

"Is n't it a father's duty to protect his children?"

"Well, what have I done! Have n't I sacrificed my life to mine? Who works harder than I do?"

"Then help me pass the exile pleasantly. Let me be a member of the family. Don't shut me up alone like a criminal!"

"You ingrate! You unnatural son! I forbid you from now

on to speak either to your brother or your sister. If you do — I'll punish them, too. I am not going to have you make revolutionists — *atheists*, out of them. His Majesty has made me jailer. That means he has faith in me. That is because he considers me a person of importance. I am forced to do my duty. If I did not, our land would be confiscated. We might be turned into the streets — sent to Siberia —" He was waving his arms excitedly now and preparing for another session of orating. He liked the subject of his personal honor. He could expatiate upon it for hours.

"I will tell you right now I will not stand it. I have done no wrong and I am not going to be punished for things I have not done. I came here to talk the matter over with you calmly. If you refuse to listen to reason you'll have to hear the truth."

"What are you going to do?"

"That is my business."

"I repeat — *what* are you going to do?"

"I refuse to reply."

Sergius Lvovitch jumped out of bed. "*Murder! Murder!*" he shrieked.

The servants came running in. He commanded them to call the grooms from the stables. His mother in a white négligée, a French fashion-book clasped to her breast, appeared for a moment upon the threshold, graceful and alien. Seeing that it was just another of the numerous tantrums of her husband, she went calmly back and told her maid to finish dressing her hair.

"*Bind him!* Now take him to the empty west room. Put a bed in there, a chair, and a table. Put narrow boards across the windows so he cannot get out. Lock him in! Then bring the key to me."

"I'll send you," he called as they were bearing him away, "to the Monastery of Solovetz. Then you'll be safe."

Under stress of anger the face of Alexis Sergiewitch turned black. His father noticed it.

"*You negro antichrist!*" he hurled after him as he disappeared in the arms of two grooms.

Alone in the bare room, Alexis Sergiewitch began to suffer a

sort of tragic despair, after the peak of anger had been passed. He had been under suspense and strain for days. Although he was unaware of it he was ill physically. He was suffering from a slow fever of the nerves which had frequently been one of the results of the violent dissensions with his father. It did not seem that he could breathe well down on the plain, after the long period spent in the sparkling, keen air of the heights. And one cause of his suffering was an hereditary one which he knew nothing about, and could not therefore take into consideration. Descendants of mixed black and white blood, like himself, in the third generation are not capable of meeting emotional strain. They may be strong physically, even muscular, but there is a peculiar lack of balance between the resisting power of body and brain. Now the great fear of his life, the Monastery of Solovetz, confronted him. Death, as he looked at it, would be nothing in comparison with this.

Knowing that Sergius Lvovitch would insist upon unburdening his mind of his griefs both large and small, and his thoughts, and more than likely would be present at breakfast, Madam Pushkin ate her breakfast in her room. Then she put on a pink flowered cashmere, which had a voluminous skirt covered to her slender waist with tiny ruffles bound with blue satin ribbon, seated herself at the painted spinet, and sang old French love-songs all the morning.

Phyllis, speak, dost love me well?

Arína Rodiónovna went from room to room wiping her eyes with one corner of a huge white apron. She had been told that if she made any attempt to see the prisoner she should be sent away to one of the other estates. Olga locked herself in her bedchamber and went without breakfast to avoid the cataract of words of her father that would surely await her.

Both Sergius Lvovitch and his wife, Nadezhda Nicolaevna, were nobles of the old school. Their idea of life was to dance, read French novels, gamble, dissipate — in short, idle. Had they been asked by a steward even to think about any practical affair, they would have considered it in the nature of an affront. *That*

was a steward's business! They knew nothing of that new, that more seriously minded Russia, that was just beginning to spring up about their feet like the weeds of a neglected garden. In truth, so rapidly was the country forging ahead in every department since the Napoleonic wars, and the return of the soldiers with new ideas from abroad, that a man of sixty could not comprehend very well a man even of thirty. There was no common level of conversational exchange. Each looked out upon a different mental world.

Sergius Lvovitch and Nadezhda Nicolaevna were altogether of the Russia that was passing, whose gentlefolk were interested chiefly in flowers, books, music, pictures, games of all kinds, theatricals, charades, but seldom in anything that possessed a practical relation to life or resembled work or responsibility. One reason, perhaps, for the general dissipation, the accomplished time-wasting for them who lived in the country, was because of the sad, monotonous immensities outside, and the dearth of people.

But for all classes the year 1820 meant change. It meant a visible breaking-up of the old ways of living, and the unrest that comes with too quickly attempted adaptation to the new. The Tsar felt this upon his throne. The petty noble-autocrat felt it upon his isolated estate. There was a gradual giving-way of the forces that had held life together and had ruled in the old days. This *giving-way* became at length the reaction of mind that gave birth to the revolutionary spirit. Now between the serf and the upper class, a bourgeois middle-class was just beginning to be, a class whose mental ideals were different.

One of the contributing influences had been the little cotton and woolen factories, springing up now like mushrooms in the south-central and southeastern part of the country, whose *employés* possessed a mental equipment unlike that of the serf or the *intelligentsia*. They began to form little mental circles of another kind. But they did not make for harmony. The noble did not like the rich merchant, and the rich merchant did not like the noble. The rich merchant felt that he was looked down upon. All classes of Russians were jealous of the favors accorded

by the government to these foreign workers. The owners of the factories did not live upon hereditary estates. They were only *men of business*, but at the same time they had that disconcerting if not respected power that money gives. This put a new element into the social life. Among the most diligent of these foreigners, who were always forging ahead for preferment of some kind, were the Germans. Their minds were well ordered. They were equipped with a definite plan.

In Alexis Sergiewitch there was something of the new world and something of the old. He adored the imagined, picture-vision of that accomplished aristocracy of the past. Its pageant pleased his eyes. It satisfied his senses. It was in fact one of the few things that he respected. At the same time the noble ideal of impersonal justice, *equality*, pulled the muscles of his mind another way. And yet, largely because of this same social leaven so powerfully at work now, he and his father could not understand each other. They could not find and hold enough pleasant, companionable places of contact. So the sad quarrels went on.

At night, when the members of the household were asleep, his sister Olga tapped upon his window. She wished to speak with him a little. She wished to try to console him. Alexis Sergiewitch had had time to meditate, to plan. He must ask for help, he saw. There was no other way out of it.

"Bring me paper and pen, Olga, as quickly as you can! I am going to write two letters. One is to Prince Viazemsky, the other to Schukowsky. I am going to tell them the whole story, and beg them to save me from the Monastery of Solovetz. To-morrow you must make some excuse to go to the village. It would never do to entrust the letters to a servant. Then, in the village, you can hire them taken to Peter by a courier. Do not let any one suspect a thing! If they happen to be in Peter, they will try to save me."

CHAPTER XIX

MIKHAILOVSKY

WHENEVER Sergius Lvovitch passed the door of his son's prison he bent down and shouted through the keyhole: "Antichrist! *Negro antichrist!*" In this way he felt that he was performing his duty as jailer. He felt that he was saving the family from Siberia. Everything depended upon him. He considered himself a martyr to duty.

The Archimandrite had been too busy to make the promised call upon the supposed penitent to pass upon the condition of his soul. There had not yet been time to decide, permanently, upon the Monastery of Solovetz. The horror still threatened him.

Arína Rodiónovna was forbidden to go to see him under penalty of exile. And so was his sister Olga, although she seldom failed to be under his window at night, no matter what might be the weather. She consoled him. She propped up his courage as best she was able. And she was sorry for him.

His mother was permitted to visit him. She intended to do so. But the last days of the sewing woman were approaching. It was necessary to look over her wardrobe rigorously, in case something *should happen* and they went to Moscow. In addition, a new French fashion plate had come. She and her maid were busy experimenting in new ways of doing her light, too curly hair. She did not like to risk herself out of her apartments too much either these days, for fear of running into Sergius Lvovitch and being drowned in a wordy sea of plans, of complaints. Years of practice had given her astonishing skill in avoiding this latter calamity.

Sergius Lvovitch did not escape suffering, too, be it said. And of a kind peculiarly hard for him to bear. He had no one to talk to. When he went to the stables, hoping to find them less lonely than the house, the grooms, who knew his failing, saw him coming and escaped, carrying with them the harnesses to be mended

or cleaned. The lonelier his day, however, the oftener he shouted "*Antichrist!*" through the keyhole. He was forced to fall back upon the comedies of Molière which were the most gossiping books he could find.

The condition of Alexis Sergiewitch was pitiable. He was alone, in semi-darkness. He had no amusement. He had no occupation but his thoughts. And the thoughts happened to be sad ones.

In the wandering years of exile spent in the South of Russia, continued practice had made of him a more experienced writer, but it had not brought him any wise or comfortable living. His mind was free and unfettered. It could climb the heights of poetic seeing. But the body was left behind. It received the undignified chastisement that falls to the lot of children. And he was no more a child in years. He had no income of his own. He had no secure or independent place of living. He was at the mercy of others. He smiled grimly when he thought of the disproportion between the fate of his body and his mind. He seemed to be extraordinary in everything, even in his ill luck. Even if he could create, reach out in some degree toward his poetic ideals, how many in Russia would read them? The serfs could not read at all. The upper class read French. The books he had printed rapidly the past few years had brought him about an equal mingling of hatred and admiration. From his acquaintances, hatred mostly, inspired by envy. The admiration came from the generous-minded young poets who were his brothers in effort, and who understood what he was doing. The great impersonal reading public he would like to have was not in Russia, then, in sufficient numbers to make a reliable or profitable following. So any genuine success in writing was a peculiar kind of failure. And all this time he was suffering with fear of the Monastery of Solovetz.

After his sister Olga told him that she had succeeded in sending his letters to Peter without being found out, he began to count the days in which he could reasonably expect some result. He had told them not to try to get a letter to him unless it bore the address of his sister, because no mail would be given to him.

It would be opened and read. This would get the senders into trouble.

When he had counted up the greatest possible length of time for the going to Petersburg and returning of a courier, a morning came when his father, instead of the usual greeting through the keyhole, unlocked the door and came in. It would be more truthful to say he strutted in. He was in a radiant — nay, more, an expansive mood. His tongue was bubbling like a brook. He held in his hand an important-looking document. It was heavily sealed with red wax. It was taped. And on his face was a pleased, flattered expression.

"*My son!*" he began pompously, "I have come to show you what are the results of a life well lived — I might even say, *without exaggeration*, a life devoted to duty. This, *this* — my son — *Look at it! This* is from His Imperial Majesty — It releases me from duty as jailer — because of my honest — my upright character. And it commands me — with the family — to Moscow for the winter. This shows how the Emperor appreciates *me*. You will be left here; you will be nominally under the care of the village police — and the Archimandrite." Alexis Sergiewitch recognized at once the good offices of Schukowsky and Prince Viazemsky. "Now, my son, left alone, I want you to meditate, I want you to consider my devotion to duty. Consider the life I have lived! Try to emulate it. It is absurd for you to think you are a poet. *Monstrous!* Read Béranger if you want to know what poetry is. Read — Béranger, my son! Do you suppose for a moment that any one would read *Pushkin*, when he could read *Béranger? Absurd! Absurd!*"

Just then some one called him. The harangue which he had started successfully was left unfinished. There was joy and confusion in the household. Bags, boxes, trunks were noisily hauled to view and emptied for refilling. The tongue of Sergius Lvovitch did not pause for an instant. It afforded an unresting, running accompaniment to all the other noises. He planned what he would do as soon as he reached the city. He had mock conversations with all his boon companions and old sweethearts. He recalled what he had said and how he had looked in such and

such a box at the opera on such and such a night, with Princess So-and-So.

Alexis Sergiewitch's mother was invisible. She was closeted with a maid and the sewing woman, whom now she had decided to take along with her. The kitchen and the cook were just as busy as the packers. The entire household was upset. The cook was getting food ready for the trip; bread, chickens, jellied meats, marmalade. Supplies of country produce had to be taken along for the town house in Moscow. Sergius Lvovitch was selecting horses to keep in the city during the winter. For the moment the house hummed like a beehive with happiness and diligence.

The morning they left Sergius Lvovitch did not bid him goodbye. He was so excited, so flustered with happiness, he forgot it. Olga wept. She kissed him again and again. He had never seen his mother look so graceful. She wore a large poke bonnet of pale pink velvet covered with dull blue satin morning-glories, which matched her eyes. A huge pink satin bow with streamers tied it under her chin. She wore a long, pointed pelisse of gray squirrel, little gray squirrel bootees, and a voluminous black velvet skirt, ruffled to the waist with narrow black satin ribbon. It seemed to sweep her frail, swaying body along. She looked barely thirty-five. She bade him a languid and indifferent goodbye, but her wide gray eyes were not thinking of him. They were thinking of balls, operas, discreet flirtations, *soirées;* in short, the only things that meant pleasure. His brother Leo, just recovering from a protracted drunk, appeared. They took him along with them.

After the noisy departure, which was like the starting of a huge circus caravan, or an army transport, there were so many vehicles and such confusion, he heard heavy, faltering steps outside his door. The key turned. The door was thrown open. The voice of Arína Rodiónovna called: "*Come*, my darling! *Come*, my pet — *my lamb!* It is you and I now."

He made his way slowly from the semi-darkness of his prison to the old sitting-room. He found it perfumed with an odor he used to like as a child, verbena. The great green rep chair with

the worn arms was by the window that looked out upon the withered pink garden. Beside it were some picture books he used to look at when he was a little boy.

He dropped down in the chair and began to weep. To his surprise he could not stop weeping. He wept on and on. It was as if some part of him were gradually dissolving. In the last few months, since he had stood on the roof of the world with General Raevsky, and looked down upon two continents at the same time, his nature had swung between such wild extremes of ecstasy, despair, and anger, that it had all but cost him his reason. For the next two weeks he was like a man convalescing from a long illness. He sat by the window idly in the pale sunlight. He soaked in renewed life through his pores. The fever in his nerves gradually subsided. His mental agitation was allayed.

Then the snow came. Alexis Sergiewitch and his old nurse stood alone together by the window and watched it. It danced in the air like a battle of gnomes. For days it fell. It covered up the garden where the dry pink stalks rattled. It blotted out the pond. It powdered the humble peasant cots as pure and white as the abodes of the angels. The fir grove at the end of the pond and the three tall pines on the highway were the only visible, black landmarks, except the windmill, which shook the snow slowly from its heavy wheel.

Winter was upon them. With each turn of the calendar the cold increased. The storms multiplied. There was something so sad, so terrible sometimes in the lonely voice of the wind of night and winter, that Alexis Sergiewitch shuddered and seemed afraid. He begged Arîna Rodiónovna to sleep again in the little room next to his, where she used to take care of him when he was a baby. Here, sometimes at night now, when some unconfessed fear made him suffer, some imagined terror loomed larger than any reality, she told him stories to soothe him to sleep, because artists are merely sensitive children grown up. Sometimes they were the tales of Rurik. Sometimes they were her own extemporized but more picturesque version of the *builini*, or what had happened to the grandmother of Alexis Sergiewitch at the elegant court of Catherine the Great.

No letters came from either his father or mother. They were too busy to write. His sister Olga, however, wrote once in a while. Her letters told of the constant round of festivities in which they were living, and which turned night into day. She declared that she seldom saw her mother save when she was entering her carriage to attend some function. The nobility were trying to be very gay because of the continued sadness of the Emperor. Sergius Lvovitch had been unlucky at cards. He had lost large sums of money. She wished Alexis Sergiewitch would tell the steward to raise all that he possibly could, even if he had to sacrifice horses or a piece of land, and send to him immediately. She explained that they were particularly short for ready money just now, because her mother had found her evening toilettes out of date. This had necessitated having new ones made in haste. It had been a heavy and unexpected drain upon them. All the women of Moscow were in love with a Polish actor, Lasky, she said. The ones who had been to Peter recently talked of him continually. Leo stayed drunk for days at a stretch. The family had so many social engagements they could not find time to look after him. And so the occasional letters read. The diversions of the Moscow winter with people of their own rank had made them forget about Alexis Sergiewitch whom they never cared to remember any too well.

After a time, in the sunshine of love and peace, his heart began to blossom again, in song. He wrote down in verse in the morning the old nurse's tales of the night. If in this verse there are no great ideas, few noble or uplifting thoughts, it is of a marvelous limpidity, a marvelous fluency. It is like the clear, sparkling rivers which he found among the lofty Caucasian Mountains. Like them, it had come from the deep, hidden sources of life, from the primeval heart, and only an ancient tongue, be it said (say, Attic Greek), can ever translate it.

He began to link himself to the outer world again. He began to take up relations with his friends. He wrote to Schukowsky. He wrote to Prince Viazemsky. He thanked them for what they had done for him. He told them he was thinking of beginning a long novel in verse, something on the order of "Don Juan."

Then he recalled to memory, in verse, the Caucasus. He finished "The Fountain of Bakshi Serai." While the snow fell and blotted out the land about them, and the polar winds shrilled in the ancient chimneys, he dreamed longingly of the beautiful, unknown Oriental he had met there, of the scent of orange blossoms in the night, in rich gardens of the South, and the nightingales. He longed passionately to see her once more. He wondered if she were lost to him forever. There was no clue by which to find her because he did not know her name. He did not know where she came from. He did not know where she was going. But he still clung to the belief that she was the spy of Metternich. Then the old nurse began to coax him out of doors. She encourgaed him to try the winter sports he used to enjoy when he was a child. She called his attention to the beauty of the Russian winter. She urged him to write of it.

He began the novel which he mentioned in the letters to Schukowsky and Prince Viazemsky. He called it "Eugène Onégin." It pictured a life like his own, on a country estate. It was a remarkably truthful reproduction of the day in which he was living. It was something new, too, in the realm of letters of his race. Without attempting to finish, at the moment, the verse novel, which promised to be long, so insistent was the propelling creative power that urged him, he began to read Shakespeare. Another and a healthier world of mind unrolled before him. Shakespeare stimulated him to original creation, as genuine writing of great periods surcharged as it is with electric and communicative life, has the power to do. He planned a play, along new lines for Russia, something still picturing the romantic history of his land, but in a period that was past, "Borís Godunoff."

As the snow fell and all but buried them with its cold whiteness, and the angry winds of a sub-polar winter whirled about the lonely manor-house sang threateningly in the great chimneys, he trod happily the old, sunny lands of romance. He moved freely whither he would. The wings of genius proved to be more effective in annihilating man's ancient enemies, time and space, which to the Russia of his day were potent, than the "Magic Cloak" of

Faust or the "Winged Shoes" of Mercury had been. The sure, the far-reaching vision, the serene contemplation, of great creative artists, for the time being, was his.

Just as General Raevsky had guided his mind upward to appreciative consideration of the sublime mountain-world of the Caucasus, the material roof of the world, so the old nurse, with an equal faith but a greater love, guided his footsteps upward again to an equally elevated world, but one of mind this time, to the roof of the spirit's life, so to speak, the Hebrew Bible. And they were not so unlike. In both were the same heights of loneliness, of grandeur, the same uplifting nobility dwarfing the shabby pettiness of ordinary surroundings, the same inspiring propulsion to far visioning, to faith. The Hebrew Prophets were unconsciously associated in his mind with the giant cliffs of rock, whose feet rested upon the humble levels where man is permitted to dwell, but whose heads reached Heaven. Both were mighty. Both were props of earth. Both overtowered life.

He read the Bible. He wrote his "Paraphrase of Isaiah," which the Russians renamed "The Prophet." In doing this, in this his second most productive period of creation, he reached his highest point of inspiration, of calm, of noble vision, a height which it is regrettable to admit he did not reach again, in the vexation, the sad confusion of his days.

CHAPTER XX

THE DECISION

At forty men begin to revalue life. At forty men begin to think about the past and change their former judgments. They find their fellow-men are not as they thought them. Reversals take place. Sometimes the bad become the good.

In Alexander's case the revaluing had been put off for a few years. But when it did come, it was not less penetrating through delay.

He had lived to find most things the opposite of what he thought them. This had saddened him. It had made him feel uneasy, unsafe. It had shaken his belief in himself, his belief in the vigor of his intelligence. In his case it had happened in two separate ways: first, in the domestic tragedy which had occurred; second, in governmental and social affairs. The latter was more difficult to deal with, because it was widespread and not easily to be compassed. At the same time it was impalpable like enveloping fog.

It was not easy for him to believe that that safe past was over forever, that gorgeous, resplendent pageant of existence in which he had spent his petted boyhood. It was not easy to believe that he was not only not the dictator of Europe, but not even of Russia. The detailed information of the rapidly growing plot against his life, the plan for overthrowing the government at the same time, had come to him from so many different sources, from such reliable sources, that he found himself in the impossible situation of believing two opposing things at the same time. He had believed himself the dictator of the Continent, the defender of the oppressed. Now, it seemed, he was being driven from his own throne, and was less and less the dictator of himself. He not only was not master of others, but it was not easy to hold on to what was his. An humiliating, puzzling, contradictory situation.

Without preparation, he was confronted with a reversal of

his dreams, his hopes, his beliefs. And the cause of it? That he could not get at. Why had he not been able to see it first himself? Why had he not felt quicker than others what was going on? Why did he not know his country better?

A penetrating German thinker had recently remarked that revolutions are made by the men against whom they are directed. This brilliant statement, true or untrue, had moved him. Since he heard it he had been debating, like Hamlet. *Is it true, or is it not true?* If it were true then he alone was guilty. He considered his failures. They were many. They could not be winked out of sight. He had failed in dealing with the domestic situation which had caused sorrow and upset his life. Perhaps he was equally incapable of dealing with the political situation which was threatening a wider destruction, threatening to upset the government.

If the reports were true (and how could he doubt them?) a crisis was at hand which must be met without delay. Surely no one disliked the harsh definiteness of a crisis, not to mention its surprising upheavals, as he did.

The country must be filled with spies, with informers. Everything would be destroyed or else uprooted. There would be secret, cruel trials. There would be imprisonments. There would be sudden deaths in dungeons. There would be sad and harrowing exile trains, setting out in the night and the storm for Siberia. There would be hundreds suffering, dying, in the mines. The land would be filled with sorrow. Tears would fall like rain. The innocent would be punished with the guilty. Men entrusted with a little temporary authority would take revenge upon their enemies. Some of his personal friends would have to be sacrificed. Countless unknown wrongs would be committed, and in his name. A reign of terror would begin.

For all the suffering, all the deaths, would not he be accountable, because it was he who ordered it? Who else could set this ponderous machine in motion, except himself? He would become a wholesale murderer. He felt that he was being pushed to act with fear as a motive power instead of reason. This was a dangerous thing to do. It was productive of ill. His mind was bombarded by thoughts which he could neither get rid of nor adjust.

It was as if his mind were the bed of a river and his thoughts the destructive, uncontrollable torrent that was rushing through it.

He was glad, indeed, that Constantine had returned to Warsaw. He was glad, too, that the distance between Petersburg and Warsaw was considerable. That false, make-believe cheerfulness during his brother's visit, that brief putting back upon his shoulders of the burden of the old ways, had been a strain upon him. He was glad that Constantine was gone. He was rid of his insistence. He felt that it further freed him from the past. He no longer had *reasons* to put up against Constantine. He had only vague sensations, feelings, not thoughts.

Constantine evidently had right and reason on his side. Since Constantine's departure he had been paralyzed by the assault of these feelings, these vague, indeterminate emotions; so much so in fact that he had turned over temporarily governmental matters to Count Benkendorf and Arakcheiev, and begun to live inaccessible to any one, plunged in meditation. It was not easy for him to focus his mind long upon a point that had to be decided. If he went out to drive, it was preferably in the early morning or the late afternoon. People who watched him pass, ignorant peasants, the superstitious, or they who loved him, crossed themselves involuntarily and murmured the name of the Prince of Peace. There was something in his face now, something in his bearing, that made the words come of themselves. They floated up from depths of consciousness. There was a different look in the eyes that had been so clear. And he was profoundly sad.

If what the various tale-bearers said was true, there was no safe place for him. He was not safe in the vast palace of his ancestors whose walls were rich with that old Muscovite art, which is so prodigal of gems, of gold. He was not safe in Zarskoje Selo, nor on his country estates; in his gardens among the flowers he loved; nor in the theater, the concert-hall. He was not safe in his cabinet where death might come with an opening door. He was not safe in the silence of the great cathedrals. If what the tale-bearers said was true, there was no safe place for him. Life had cast him off. The effect of this realization was that he was sick of living, and not what is ordinarily understood as physical

fear. He had lost all he loved. There was nothing left to live for. He had struggled until he was weary. He wished that it was over.

Just as when on the sudden break-up of the happy domestic life with Marie Antonova, having found things not what they seemed, he had recast the past, for strengthening, for guidance, so now, when he found the social political surroundings not what he thought them, he did the same, with the hope of reassuring himself, with the hope of finding a way out.

If it was not easy for him to set in motion a reign of terror, it was not wholly weakness, not wholly personal distaste. It was partly because still as basic thought in his mind was the forced reliance that in so brief a time the unlimited power of the past could not have perished. How could such a change come and he not see it?

The first years of his reign had been happy. They had been gay with the gayety of youth, youth in his heart, youth in the land about him. Artists, scientists, thinkers came. Poets began to sing like birds in tall tree-tops in spring. And it was partly because of him! These years had been sportively nicknamed "The truce of the poets." Life gave promise of "glorious summer" in the sun of his youth. "The winter of discontent" was over. In every department of the broad land these years had been a blossom period. He had not been lonely then, either, as he was now. He had had happy, similarly minded friends with whom he had enjoyed his political dreams. With them he had made and unmade worlds. Then, suddenly, he remembered how he had disappointed these young friends. He paused a moment in his meditation, astonished at the thought.

The proud, the brilliant, Prince Adam Czartoryski had relied upon Alexander's pledged word to make his native Poland free. And Pozzo di Borgo had been similarly happy in the promise that he would give freedom and power to Greece. His personal charm, his yielding grace, had been a false promise to them. In both cases he had intended to do it. Nay, more, he had planned to do it. It was his wish. But the definite decision he could not bring himself to face, that brief, momentary crisis, which meant the

sudden severing of a part of the present. He kept putting it off from year to year. In the end he disappointed them both.

His grandmother had loved him. She had been proud of him. He was her favorite always. She had expected him to duplicate the conquests of Alexander of Macedon. She had expected him to conquer the earth. That was why she had given him the Macedonian's name, so he could not forget. That was why he had been taught to speak the Greek tongue like a native. This golden dream for the future had hovered over his flexible, alluring youth. It had made him happy in its contemplation, which was as near as he liked to approach the definiteness of any reality.

Suddenly it occurred to him that in *her* youth she could have done what she planned so proudly for him. He paused again, astonished at the force of this. In her, he knew, there had been various greatnesses whose harmonious coming together had given strength. But in her day there had been harmony among the people. They did not disagree upon important points of policy. He must admit, too, that in her there had been a persistent, enterprising joy of mind, a youth age could not touch, which carried her triumphantly over difficulties. Circumstances could never have mastered her because of this youthful elasticity of nature which enabled her to look down upon them with disdain. It might be true, as bitter critics had asserted, that with her all was not *real* gold. But the imitation, if imitation it was, had been satisfactory and yielded charm. And no one could dispute its effectiveness, its power. He had disappointed this proud promise of his youth, and therefore his people, just as he had disappointed his boyhood friends. But he had not intended to. He had planned to do everything. Now reality showed him that he had done nothing. He did not comprehend how the result could be what it was, nor where the years had gone. They had rushed past him like a mill-race. He had not gone with them. It was not his wishes that were wrong. He had been right. It was facts. Facts had been obstinate. Life with him had been a brilliant, impressive improvisation, because whatever he had planned had remained undone. The old landed nobility had stubbornly resisted his efforts for reform. They would have none of

them. They wanted life lived on lonely ancestral estates just as their fathers had lived. He never had had anything as he wanted it. He loved peace. He loved quiet. And he had lived in agitation, in dissension. He hated cruelty. Daily it was done in his name. This explained why Arakcheiev, who was rough and brutal, was ruling now with such high hand. Arakcheiev formed the necessary, the logical pendant to the indecision of Alexander.

But how could he be blamed for failing, he asked himself on a sudden with a refluence of courage, for not doing more than he had done, with the Napoleonic wars upon his hands?

The events of that sickening Russian campaign! It had saddened his sensitive, emotional nature. He had never succeeded in putting its memory out of his mind.

He recalled too often, even now, the thousands and thousands of glad-hearted boys he had lured to death by sight of his manly, handsome, uniformed figure, by the clasp of his hand, by the foolish gift of silken flags, of bright banners, by the fervent eloquence of his prayers. The guilt upon his soul! And the long period of carnage that followed! How horrible for a nature like his, a poet's nature, that loved flowers like an Asiatic, and love and silence; literature; and the white, caressing arms of women!

Then fell God's judgment — upon the battle-fields of ice! *God's judgment!* And in his favor. God gave victory to him. This had shaken him to the verge of reason. In gratitude of soul he promised his future to his Maker.

And here, too, he had been a disappointment, a disappointment therefore to man, and God. From whatever he promised or planned, he slipped away. And he did not know how. Now there was the murder of the Greeks, his own co-religionists, by the Turks, in the face of his prohibition. The Mussulmans had just sworn extermination of the Greeks. The Peloponnesian War was in full blast. There was savage butchery. There was mutilation of bodies of priests, of his faith. He had promised to protect them. But he did nothing. It was as if something uncanny paralyzed his will and he could not shake himself free.

Diplomacy, too, was intercepting him now. Metternich was determined that Alexander should not interfere. He wanted

Austria to gain fresh territory and a sea-outlet in the south. He worked to discourage him. England agreed with Metternich. England had her own personal, selfish reasons against his interfering. She wanted an open passway toward those clear cities of Asia, a passway for herself, which should not be policed by Russia.

In addition his mind was of a caliber to permit him to find out, like Canute of old, that after all he was only a man, and that he could not bid the waves be still. He was only a man, whom a political superstition, already going out of date, had given temporary supremacy. These were all unavoidable, direct meeting with facts and they pained him. Their unyielding surfaces made him suffer. His vision of life was a poet's idealized vision, which sugar-coats facts, with whom fact is merely a starting-point, *from which to forget.* He had no stern, logical, realizable prose ideal to guide him. Beauty, fineness had to be ingredients of things that interested him. If not, serviceability must remember to wear their dissembling cloaks. He was a *poet*, not a politician, not a social reformer. His living was ruled by delicately graded sensations, exquisite adjustments, not by logic nor strategic thought.

Metternich, too, was dimming more and more that gorgeous, hummingbird, poet's iridescence which was his by birth. Metternich, one of the most practiced and unscrupulous intrigants, was more and more frequently keeping him from doing things which were to his advantage to do. By forcing Russia down, Austria perhaps could rise.

Metternich was in the habit of selling individuals and nations, cheaply, for personal inclination, for any slight political reward, payable in no matter how remote a future. He sold Marie Louise in marriage to Napoleon for the purpose of being permitted to increase the standing army of Austria. By trickery, by treachery, he sold the popularity of Alexander at the Congress of Verona. He placed him in the light of a moral defaulter to his people. He was a masterly bargainer in the little dim Shops of Discontent for other men's honor, other men's power. And he disapproved just now of a Russian war against the Turks. He had

plans of his own to carry out. He wanted delay in everything. He preached continually *watchful waiting* because the country he was guiding was weak. It needed peace. It needed time for rehabilitation. In the South was its only chance for expansion. Alexander had been frequently, of late, getting in Metternich's way. Here England met Metternich, strange to say, and Alexander was confronted by the irresistible foreign policy of Canning.

He was as deeply grieved by the bitterness, the treachery in men's hearts, as by the domestic tragedy that had befallen him, or the present threatening political one. His grief over the baseness of humanity was greater than for any loss that could come to him. From his point of view pleasant intercourse with people was largely founded upon *liking them.* If he could not like them, for him there was no reason left for conversation. His growing deafness was having its effect, too. It was blurring the spoken word. This increased both his suspiciousness and his sensitiveness.

There was no one now he fully trusted except Arakcheiev and the Empress. In this he was right. Both were loyal to him. What his own suspicious nature failed to see, Metternich stood ready to suggest to him. He missed, therefore, the reliable, the consolatory support of friendship, its heat of courage in the heart. He *saw* seldom the devoted companions of his boyhood. They had made life happy in the old days. Without them he had grown lonelier. In that vast Russia it was especially necessary that men should warm their hearts by each other. He was like an unanchored ship now. He drifted helplessly.

His friends had not been able to understand him, to be sure, any more than any one else. No one had had his confidence, except, perhaps, Marie Antonova. And she had not deserved it. Now, since the shock of finding out what she was, he was more than ever a master of concealment, more than ever lonely. In the forgiving splendor of art he might have found consolation. But his days had been devoted to politics, to dry detail.

The prime motive power back of this concealment may have been some unconfessed fear, a snapping of one of the multiple

spider-thin bonds of reason. Something, probably, had happened to him, in his impressionable youth, at his grandmother's dissolute and intriguing court, that had dried up forever the fine and happy springs of confidence and filled him with fear, with distrust of humanity, which he could not get over. Now, just as with other men, he was merely falling prey to his greatest weakness.

Not many, of course, are given the power which had been his, to force dreams to reality, and then find them soap-bubbles, their glowing color changed to dirty water. He had watched too many gay realities suffer this sad transformation. This was making him more and more, as the days went by, a figure unique, lonely, and pathetic. Within the souls of other men he felt there was a poise, a calm, a stern decision, which would have saved him, but which he could not get hold of, and which he desired more than anything else in the world. But no simple human thing, it seemed, could be his and be retained. To him came the glittering uselessnesses which burned while they illuminated.

He had lost that *puissance de bonheur* which Napoleon in his heyday used to talk about, without which men cannot live nor succeed. He thought of it again and again in his present dilemma. Historical facts, too, at this moment uncatalogued, were beginning to throw their perplexing influences around him. The Russian nation was just beginning to react from the self-sympathetic, unifying emotion which had acompanied the driving-out of Napoleon. He, too, unconsciously, was in some degree at the mercy of the same reaction. He had been proud of his part in defeating Napoleon. But now, as he looked at it, he saw that it was not he who had defeated him. It was the masses. That great, inert, dull, unlettered, despised mass called *the Russian people* had risen in fury like a sea and swept him out. *The people* had saved Russia, and not Alexander, the glorified, the princely leader. It was the spirit of an entire race speaking in outraged resentment, and not himself. Nations usually fall or rise by their own momentum, the king being an accident and not a potent force. Somewhere in the far future, evidently, justice was going to be done to humble man.

Another powerful cause at work in his present mental condition he could not know nor suspect, and therefore could not be blamed for, a cause reserved for the discovery of prying psychologists a century later. It was this: The Russians of the eighteenth century, his grandmother's period, did not live long. The Russians of the early nineteenth century, Alexander's day, suffered from premature old age of the mind. The educated Russian of this period was a forced hothouse growth of time, and like all such abnormalities lacked endurance. This was the price they paid for civilization too quickly absorbed. This was the price they paid for insisting upon leaping over the safe boundaries of the centuries. The bodies of the men of the eighteenth century wore out too soon, and the minds of the men of the first half of the nineteenth century. The reason that his grandmother had escaped so triumphantly was because in her there was no Russian blood, and the law became inoperative. She belonged to a more enduring stock that had been slow in reaching maturity.

Mental weariness came quickly to men of the upper class now; disillusion, which means loss of pleasure in living; and in extreme cases the madness of melancholia. Old age of the mind, in short. In obedience to the working of this law, Alexander had lost the elastic strength of hope which is the dominant quality of youth. He was feeling that indifference to living which was a trait of the cultivated men of his time. He had lost, partly through this, his faith in his fellows, his illusions, too, his fine, free, unforced reliance upon humanity, which, however foolish it may seem, man must have. Saddest, perhaps, he had lost sense of kinship with his race. As he looked out now upon that great confusion which men call the world, his own thoughts were far more revolutionary, far more astonishing, than those of the young men for whose punishment Arakcheiev was still clamoring.

A huge, a glittering sun of disenchantment was rising slowly and majestically in his mind. It was rising victoriously. It was forcing its painful, penetrating rays in all directions. Nothing escaped it. It shriveled first and then dried up his little happinesses until now he did not have any left. It was making of him a desert where nothing gracious grew. And it was making of his

old, waiting fears, a black, threatening, monstrous army of night, ready to descend *en masse* upon him. His glad, unreasoned courage was gone; his mind's youth.

The thing most disconcerting of all which this bitter sun showed him was another reversal and an astonishing one. That bitter sun of disenchantment was showing him that, while the army of Napoleon, who was the little grandson of the Great Revolution, had perished upon the snow-fields and met defeat, the invisible army of his ideas was still marching on. It was at work now defeating him. The scales, without warning, had been turned. What witchery was this! What dizzy will-o'-the-wisp had been lighting false pathways for his feet! Who could dream that such a thing could come to pass? That little grandson of the great upheaval was unconquerable now. The material conquest, which he had so unwisely ascribed to himself, was, like most of his other conquests, of not so much importance. What a faculty he had for turning pluses into minuses! The will of Napoleon had destroyed that old world he used to know and love and be happy in. It had killed its dreams. It had weakened its ambitions. Like the waving of a magician's wand it had brought about a mighty materialization. *Impersonal justice*, too, the right of every human being, irrespective of color or race, to a share in the good things of the earth was a part of that new world-spirit for which the invisible army of the Great Conqueror was fighting on.

Was there nothing he could lay hold of? Was there nothing he could keep? Must whatever his hands touched slip away like illusive water? Was there some curse upon him? What classic fable could compare with what in reality had happened to him? He had been proud of having conquered Napoleon. Now this fact, too, was slipping out of sight. The ideas Napoleon's soldiery had disseminated were a mighty, invisible army. These ideas were rapidly moulding a new race of men in the world, men whom he could neither understand nor control.

And before his brain there was a vision he did not like to contemplate, but which he could not put away. It was the troubling vision of that upstart soldier, Napoleon, who had leaped by sheer

ability, unaided, to the heights where he was born, but where he was not strong enough to maintain himself. What geographical magic he had wrought! He had ripped up the old Rhine States and then made them over into a confederation to suit his ends. He had cut off a slice of Germany reaching from the Elbe to the Alps and named it France.

He recalled, involuntarily, those nights of brilliant conversation between Napoleon and Metternich, long ago, in Paris, stories of which the great Austrian had related to him, with such relish. Fragments of phrases burned in his memory, quickly etched impressions, worded by Metternich: *Napoleon, artist of power. . . . That superb egotism that must live art. . . . That mind that clothed words in flashing symbol and then translated symbol into fact. . . . That man for whom the round earth was just a playground.* That daring figure which arose without warning to dim the splendor, the efficiency of him, Alexander.

In this period of the general breaking-down of usual laws he was forced to admit that he did not have that personal, that potent word over men which had been Napoleon's, and which might have hindered somewhat further the moral decay. He, Alexander, had charm, seductive grace; weaker characteristics. The difference between gold and steel. He, Alexander, knew the human heart, but he was unable to turn that knowledge to account.

The vivid phrasing of Metternich came back to memory again: *That swift shaping, that swift cutting-out of new nations, by one man's will. That shaking-up of monarchies and then setting them down upon their feet like naughty children after punishment. That dizzy, deft, sweeping away of the old régime. . . .* All this shook his faith in the ancient blood of kings. He saw sadly that wars are not over when articles of peace are signed. That is merely the signal for crueler wars to begin, wars more deeply destructive, more intangible. The great upheaval still goes on. It merely changes its weapons. Civilization then sets about forging for itself new worlds out of the fragments of the old worlds.

Then he succumbed to the natural impulse to shift the blame. There had been too many meddlesome foreigners in Russia.

They had always tried to take a hand in affairs. In early days the foreign influence had been that of honest, capable workmen. Now it was largely of crafty adventurers. Russia had been exploited as a place of quick fortune-making. How could it be all his fault? Had not Russia been a rich grab-bag into which merry, unthinking feminine rulers had plunged their pretty hands to seize its monstrous wealth and then fling it away in gifts of extravagant living before the eyes of an amazed world? A long, theatrical fair! While it lasted, it was something gorgeous and splendid, this stripping open of the rich, untouched heart of a continent to make its treasures ripple in the light.

There were colonies of alien races scattered throughout the land. They were centers of hostile and unassimilable thought with fecund, long, outreaching tendrils. He, too, had helped foster this quick colonization by trained and *habile* foreigners. Once permitted, it was not easy to still the longing in the intellectual Russian for the mental life of Europe. Patriotism could not console him for starvation of the mind. But it was wrong now, he felt. It was the result of a sort of foolish impatience; namely, the unwise attempt to make, to ripen a civilization too quickly. Different races could not be formed into a compact one without the slow aid of time.

Like the rulers before him, his mind had been dazzled by the power, by the beauty, by the progress of Europe. Like them he, too, longed to transplant this, all in a moment, to his own land. It would have been better for the little native centers of industry, village arts, peasant arts, to have been given a slow fostering, and then waited, with patience. The result would have had a greater, a more dependable strength. Almost every country of the globe had its little separate colonies in Russia. These many tongues made it the modern, toppling, threatening Tower of Babel. The great, level, central plain which bore the name *Russia* was merely a mammoth road for the restless migration of nations.

That much-talked-about conquest over Napoleon was not really so important to his native land as the very different industrial conquest being carried on everywhere now by these for-

eigners. This turning upside down of civilization was presenting everywhere different surfaces of life to the light. Some of them were astonishing. In this new world a man did not need to be noble of heart, or gracious of soul, or condescending, but to possess something astonishingly different, a clear comprehension of the possible combinations of the earth's unexploited substances. The old picturesque past where kings swaggered about in crown and ostrich feathers was over forever. A world as new as that which Columbus discovered was heaving into sight, only it was a good deal stranger. In his meditating upon the difficult situation little separate pin-pricks of misery shone, for the most part the result of suggestions coming from Metternich, but all of which, when carried to ultimate reason, belittled him, the sovereign. As an example in point, the close relations, which had been in existence so many years between Russia and England, were not wholly the result of wise, imperial initiative, nor far-seeing diplomatic cunning, but of the humble, tongueless, armless cotton bobbins in Birmingham mills. *Economic, therefore.* This constant uncovering of the ghosts of unannounced facts was startling. It was really this economic rivalry, with France and Germany entering the game, that had brought on the war of which he and Napoleon were the glittering figureheads. This constant, convincing agony of mind which was slowly destroying himself was terrible. It was the first exhibition of a new tragedy which the future would duplicate and duplicate again, a mean, sordid, base, agonizing tragedy, the tragedy of a new world devoid of all nobility.

He was peculiarly out of harmony, peculiarly ill at ease, with this commercial, this increasingly middle-class society, which the war had ushered in, and which heralded untried ways of life, and which his own tolerant, generous nature had not hastened quickly enough to check.

Different thoughts were the property of the people. There was a disturbing sense of comradeship, of sympathy for each other among the masses which meant strength for them, and which had not been before. The power of the middle classes was increasing. To add further to the general confusion, his country

was beginning to think its own thoughts, in this widespread social demoralization. It was getting tired of leading-strings.

And he who held by the spirit saw that this spiritual change did not have a spiritual cause. It was merely an exhibition of mind adjusting itself to matter.

The cause was material. Those bourgeois, those middle-class men, whose manners needed mending, and whose taste was commonplace, sometimes had brains. With their brains they had made little cold-blooded, tireless, nimble-moving machines, which turned out luxuries with which to clothe the body, to protect the home. In time they would bring to commonplace man the comfort of kings. They would help protect him against cold, disease, toil, weariness, discomfort. In addition they brought to his brain a comprehension of the earth's latent wealth and its possibilities for himself. With these little machines increasing in number and cheapness, there had come a new and an unexpected light in his ambition, a demand for a broader, a finer living. He thought such a change could come alone through prayer. He had been taught that. He believed it. The surprise to him was not slight.

The new world-spirit which the soldiers of Napoleon had disseminated, and which the inventive genius of the middle class had illustrated and developed, did not depend upon the old picturesque doctrine of servant and master, the old slave system, that one man is better than another, one born to eat cake which he does not earn, and another black bread which he does earn, but upon something more powerful, something more broadly beneficent, *material efficiency*. The far expansion of material things suggested a new, a potent, an unguessed divinity. It meant that all must work for the good of all. There would be no place for kings. This was a blow. He had not reached this thought before. There would be place for no personal superiority of inherited possession either of place or wealth. Inherited superiorities, such as had prevailed under the old régime, were just so many warts on the body politic, ugly excrescences to be cut away. In the heart of every human being, born in the age of the machines of the whirling spindles, there would be somber distrust of centralized power. When man could live like a king he would

soon begin to think like one. The real difference was on the outside as much as on the inside. The mainspring of the new world just at hand was material, not spiritual. The old régime had broken his spirit by first crushing his body. It had taught him suffering, and as reward pitiful patience. The new world would teach him political power, then equality. That new world would be astonishing! He shuddered at the thought. The words *material power* expanded to their limit, then carried to logical result in individual application, meant something tremendous. In this new world they would not always pray pitifully for mercy for the dying. They would work, first, to delay death, then to eliminate it. Man, heretofore, had been a suppliant, prostrate, crushed. Now he would learn to stand. What could man not become!

The ideal of the old world that was passing, which reached its first height in France before the Revolution, and its second, as a sort of mirrored, exaggerated, false echo, in the nobility of Russia, had had three supreme ideals: *The Penitent, The Passion Flower, The Pageant-Maker.* Three ways of *artistic playing.* These ideals had hindered material progress. They were unfair. They were unjust. They were dramatic, useless exploitations of the ego which could not go on. They were illustrations of *one* absorbing the life-forces of *many.* They could not exist, powerfully, in the future. They must die. They must pass away. They were merely prodigious leeches upon an old romantic civilization, such as poets like him dreamed as children, but now out of date. The new world would find these ideals weak, cowardly, slightly ridiculous, and cheaply showy. Pagandom and the old France of kings had been the earth's childhood. Now its mature, responsible manhood was at hand.

Business, *commerce,* in their broadest expansions, would be the evolutionizing force, instead of religion. Commerce would open new continents. It might chain and then exploit the stars. It would be the forerunner to plant civilization. It would walk hand in hand with a wizard, *Science.* Motive power back of living would change. It would be scientific, not emotional. But the heart would go out of life.

This great, outswinging, tragic vision of melancholy gave him a sort of soul-homesickness, unuttered longing, for that spiritually nobler, more delicate civilization which was fading, but in which he was meant to live and play his part. He did not wish to confront the new, the different race to be born, whose watchword would be *economy*, not *exquisiteness*. He did not feel anything within himself with which to meet it. Wars, evidently, left wounds which could neither be healed nor effaced.

He was acrobatically trying to straddle two spheres of time, which were showing more and more an inclination to swing away from each other. In the broad streets of his proud Petersburg different ages of time were now beginning to meet and to jostle each other in a manner that was noticeable, like the masked grotesqueries in a village carnival. He, too, was just one of the stumbling figures that swept by. The difference between him and the other maskers was not one of indwelling superiority, but merely of greater richness of cloak and mask. He was just one of the passing street carnival to be jeered at along with the others: "*You funny, you old-fashioned creature!*"

The old world to which he was accustomed, in its holiday carnival in one of the long Streets of Time, had gayly held up an Hellenic mask. This represented joy, physical beauty, luxury of the senses, superiority of the individual, freedom from work and care, emotion of the eye.

The Christ came. There was inaugurated a different carnival in the long Streets of Time. It wore an Hebraic mask. It represented the practical, the economic. It stressed the present. It stressed the humble. It stressed sympathy for suffering — and love. The old Hellenic carnival in these long streets which can never end, where always carnivals go on and on, had made a display of masks of beauty, of external loveliness. But he himself had worn a double mask, the Hellenic, which Hebraic pity had made incomprehensible.

In the light of this rising sun of disillusion, this heightened vision of melancholy, if he saw exaggeratedly, he saw, too, prophetically, *and far*.

Not only was this change going forward in his country, he

knew, but throughout the world. Not alone were Slav lands restless. Europe was restless too. It was ill of *la maladie française.* Daring and brilliant thinkers were welcoming the new world which was just swinging into sight. There had been Byron and Shelley in England. There were Goethe, Heine, Börne, La Salle, in Germany. There were Chaadaiev, Polevoy, Ryleiev, Griboyedow, and Alexis Sergiewitch, to mention only a few, in Russia; Manzoni, Ugo Foscolo, in Italy. In France, Chateaubriand, Constant; Simon Bolivar, in South America; and preceding them, George Washington, in the United States, and the negro of Haiti, Toussaint L'Ouverture.

How could he alone be expected to meet a world-crisis? He knew now that it was not exclusively a Russian crisis. No matter what Count Benkendorf and Arakcheiev had tried to talk into him in the last stormy interviews, he could not be expected to turn aside a world in transition. This lessened his responsibility. Their vision was short and feeble. That was the reason they demanded so much of him.

Now he had found the way out. Now he knew how to step aside. An ancient proverb of his race occurred to him with forcible applicability. *To-morrow — to-morrow, but not to-day!* He would go South, ostensibly to review the troops for the impending war. But he would not commit himself, *absolutely,* yet to war. This would leave a possible exit for him either way, and it would divert the popular mind. The gate of escape necessary for his mental outlook, his comfort, would be left open. He would go South, at once. He sensed dimly now, with something that might have risen to the pleasant relief of humor, in this refreshing moment of relaxing, a similarity between himself and young Alexis Sergiewitch. Just as he had once exiled young Pushkin from Petersburg, now Fate, ironically enough, was exiling him.

But he had found a temporary way out. The crisis was delayed. He would go South.

CHAPTER XXI

THE FAREWELL

The carriage was at the door. It was three in the morning. Alexander, dressed for traveling, a long black cape thrown over his arm, wearing no sword, no mark of his exalted position, was walking slowly through the vast lonely rooms of the Winter Palace, where myriads of dying candles flickered; a lonely, sad, dramatic figure in this proud, triumphant setting of the past.

The day before he had made a will. He felt relieved. It left everything to his brother Nicholas. Nicholas was reliable. He could depend upon him. At the same time he had exacted from him a promise to burn immediately his letters, his papers. He did not wish any telltale writing of his to be left behind.

With his upper, his reasoning mind, he kept telling himself that he was just setting out for a brief visit to his Southern possessions, to stop a while in Taganrog on the way, for the sake of change and the health of the Empress. But with his subconscious mind he was making preparations for a prolonged absence. A part of life, he sensed dully, for him was over. The destroying of his little personal pleasures, the commonplace joys of every day, with their reasoned guidance, had thrown him over suddenly to the dark, swift power of that mighty, invisible current which is the subconscious self, which binds us to the infinite and sweeps us along with no will of our own.

He had slept but little of late. When he did sleep he was tortured with unhappy visions. It was not rest. His waking hours had not been much better. They had been filled with gloomy presentiments. He saw what he felt to be omens of death everywhere. Because of the terror of these presentiments he kept candles burning throughout the Palace in the day. In their light, in their forlorn effort for their former festal air, he found something feebly akin to courage. He crept close to them. He stood in front of them trying to warm back his heart to the old calm.

The disciplined servants who stood guard at the doors watched him in astonishment. They whispered to each other timidly, when relieved from duty, that it was like serving a stranger, that *something was wrong*. He was the same, and yet he was so different they could not find words with which to express it. They did not know how to describe it. It surprised them. It made them uneasy. His eyes did not seem to focus upon them when he looked at them. This began to frighten them. When, the morning before, the order had been given to keep candles burning throughout the night in the unused state apartments and to open them and set them in order, they concluded that, like his father, he must be mad. To-night there was another change in him. To-night the old expression of double meaning upon his face was gone. In its place there was something sterner, something that foreshadowed resolve.

Through the vast, lonely, glittering rooms, where countless candles twinkled, where his days had been so glorious, so futile, his tall, black figure moved, while the round, frightened eyes of inquisitive servants peered after him. He paused first and longest in front of the chair beneath the long Venetian mirror, in the little anteroom, where he had sat as a boy, on a night just like this, alone under the candles, and listened to the sounds of agony that came from an adjoining room where they were strangling his father to death. The long mirror had recorded his face of boyish suffering, just as now it was recording his maturer face of cold resolve. What futile years stretched between!

In the state ballroom, the polished floor twinkled like the feet of invisible dancers, where the boasted beauties of Europe, with smiling eyes, had offered their hearts to him, where the passion of music had intensified life, making them forget its limits, its forced reserves. The deep mirrors were rich with the visions of the past. Within them slept the memory of jewels that had sparkled, eyes of love that had lured, and the lifted languor of arms. Across them once had moved all that muted mirage which was the past. He crossed the solemn, the stately splendor of drawing-rooms. Here Marie Antonova had queened it, wearing upon her throat and brow the jewels of Russia. All the rooms

kept intimate memories for him, because it was in this regal setting that he had played his part. Here admiration for his great position, flattery, love for his personal beauty, his charm, had lured him fatally, had made him smile, and forget, and then drift on.

He paused longest before the portrait of his grandmother. It had been painted when she was old and fat. His mind registered accurately the robust vitality, the coarse animal strength, and the slight distortion of the too long chin. She seemed alive and vibrant now.

The former Empress, who had preceded her, Elizabeth Petrowna, was luscious and lovely, like the rich pigment of the canvas that preserved her for posterity. They had been two of the world's most immoral women. They were merely crowned courtesans. But how successfully they had lived! As he recalled the past, walking alone with the dead, under the fading candles, it was like looking down on dead cities, they were so far away. He saw plainly. He understood. But that was all.

The next picture he did not look at. Try as he would, he could not. He stood in front of it with bowed head. It showed his frail little daughter wearing his last gift to her, her crown of pitiful forget-me-nots, and painted on her eighteenth birthday. His celebrated *maîtrise de soi-même* forsook him here. He turned away. He went quickly over to the window as if for relief. The blackness struck him like a blow. Cold night and space frowned in upon him.

He wrapped himself hurriedly in the long, concealing cape. He left the Palace. Outside, at the foot of the stairs, he told his adjutant-general, Prince Volkonsky, to drive on ahead, to a place he designated outside the city, and there to await him. When Prince Volkonsky had disappeared, he gave a whispered order to his own coachman. He took his seat.

It was four o'clock when he reached the door of the Church of Alexander Nevsky. But it was still dark. The daylight nights of summer were gone. Over the city bent the night.

He was not unexpected evidently. There was movement about the solemn enclosure. A crowd of silent, gray-clad, ghostly

figures were there. They were lined up in order awaiting him. They were the monks, the living dead. In his long, black cape as he swept commandingly between them, wearing no insignia of rank, no mark of worldly power, he did not look so greatly dissimilar.

In the churchyard here his little children slept. He did not visit them. He did not even turn his head in their direction. The past did not matter now. He seemed to resemble both the monster and the saint, who seldom leave descendants for posterity. Like them he had been surprising and splendid instead of useful. There were no children of his left living. There was nothing of him, in fact, left behind in Petersburg to trouble the peace of the future. The severance was clean.

He crossed the courtyard quickly. When his foot touched the outer threshold, the group of ghostly figures in their grave-clothes chanted in unison with a penetrating vibration: "*Lord, save thy people!*" The chant echoed after him dully upon the darkness. He walked on to the circular space under the hollow dome whose edges were just touched with gray. He knelt here awhile in silence. Then he kissed the cross. At a slight distance glimmered the tomb of the saint himself, Alexander Nevsky. Upon it he could see faintly huge figures of barbaric metal, torn from his country's rich but brutal heart, keeping forever here that solemn gesture of submission, which was his for the moment.

He arose. He was still muffled in the long, black, concealing cape. He made his way slowly in the dimness to the interior of the church where he chose at random a seat among the great number vacant.

The aged Metropolitan, Seraphim, entered. He paid no attention to the silent, seated figure. He wore robes of mourning. He began at once, in a voice that was old and shaking, to celebrate the solemn mass for the dead.

He began to listen in what seemed to him an unusual way. He began to listen with ears that were not those of his physical body. He was listening with the aroused, the prophetic powers of them who have taken a step away from life, and whose senses are not so dulled by its deceptive attachments. Passing over his

head, in cold, far spaces above him, in this ghostly hour between the night and the day — passing with the swiftness of silken but invisible wings — went the greatness of Russia which had reached its apex of governmental power in Europe just as melancholy began to touch his mind. Then passed in solemn succession the imperial, the brutal ambitions of his ancestors, regretfully, perhaps angrily, as if power were ill-placed with him. The banishing wrath of that forceful, slightly brutal personality, his grandmother, now rested with scorn upon him. He had overturned the structure she had so carefully built. He was undermining the security of the past. He felt little regret, however.

The music of the impressive litany swayed on. It bore him with it. His lips began to frame words to suit it. His lips framed unuttered prayers. "*O! God, let me shed no more blood! Let me punish no more! No more let me lift my hand in judgment against men! O! God — make me free! No longer let me be a slave to the vain, the foolish attachments of life. Like the winds, O! God, make me mighty, and free!*" His heart was making its own, its despairing chant to the rise and fall of the music.

As soon as the mass for the dead was over, he arose. He went out. When he reached the outer door, just preparatory to leaving, he found the aged Seraphim. He was awaiting him. The old man held a tiny silver statue in his hand. It was a statue of the Christ. Upon it was scratched faintly the letter "A," the initial of the Emperor's name. He lifted it and made with it the sign of the cross over the bent head of Alexander. Then he presented it to him and disappeared. When the outer gate clanged behind him, the living dead in their ash-hued robes were still there. Again they lifted the old resounding chant. It echoed in his ears as he walked away: "*Lord, save thy people!*"

Day was not far off now. Three thin bars of level, steely light superimposed each other in the east. The highest towers were growing visible. He saw the gold dome on Saint Isaac's. He saw the shaft that topped the Palace of the Admiralty, which sailors recognize at sea. But in the streets below it was still so dark that the *bôutchnicki* in their sentinel kiosks on

the street-corners did not know him as he drove swiftly past them.

They were crossing the first pleasant prairie levels when he told the driver to stop. Petersburg, the city that had been fatal to his race, was visible here for the last time. After hesitating a moment, restlessly, he stood up in the carriage. He turned. He looked back. His face was whiter now, and pitiful. It recalled vaguely that of the Christ when he wept over Jerusalem. Through his mind swept the cry of Christ, "*Jerusalem, why stonest thou the prophets!*" His lips did not move. He did not utter a sound. But before he sat down again he stretched out his arms toward the vanishing city with an almost awkward gesture, an ambiguous gesture. In his eyes there was an expression that suggested a long farewell.

Then the driver turned with a quick noise of wheels into the broad, smooth *chaussée*, the same along which Alexis Sergiewitch had traveled on his way to exile. Only now the time of year was different. Alexis Sergiewitch was going toward the promise of spring, while winter confronted Alexander. The road stretched away proudly before him, vigorous and white under the new day. At no great distance ahead now, at the place he had designated, he came up with Prince Volkonsky. Here Alexander gave himself over to his passion for driving at speed which had been his most persistent relaxation in time of trouble. They dashed away noisily together across the autumn landscape, which here in the North was cold and austere. Its riotous colors were gone. The air about them was silent. The birds had left. Thus, monotonously for days, the wheels rolled on through flat leagues of unenlivened fields.

As usual, when night came, Alexander could not sleep. They drove a part of the night, to the discomfort of the driver. That night, too, as it happened, which was the thirteenth, a fiery, bearded comet appeared for the first time in the sky. It traveled in their direction. It traveled along with them. Like a beacon, its bloody light led the way.

When Prince Volkonsky first looked up and saw it, he said to himself, somewhat superstitiously for him: "*That must be just*

such a comet as men saw when Caesar fell." He crossed himself. But he did not trouble to communicate his thoughts to others. The superstitious driver saw it. He was in terror. He kept murmuring to himself. He crossed himself vigorously. Once or twice he spoke as loud as he dared to the erect, white-faced figure that did not hear nor reply: "*Master — that means evil! Master — do not go on.*"

In the days that followed, the vast, lonely levels that surrounded him began to comfort him. They gave him the same relief that the cold wind of night and winter used to give him in the old days when vexations beset him. They were perhaps symbols of that desolation where human importunities, human weaknesses, which had grieved him in the past, are not. The cloistral impersonality of space refreshed him. The relief to be going away! The relief to have given up the temporary guidance of government! The relief of having given up even the temporary guidance of self to the driver! Facts, he could not deal with. He could no longer struggle with them. He was helpless, useless. All he could do now was to run away. That hot, beating, quivering, perplexing thing which was humanity, with its wrongs, its griefs, had always made him suffer.

And humanity could not understand him, because the word *strength*, to people at large, means merely an alloy in the gold. Pure gold is rare. And it is less serviceable.

In a way, perhaps, he had always managed to keep his own soul out of it, *above it*, this suffering, struggling humanity, in a sort of exquisite, proud aloofness, but now at how terrible a cost — loneliness. Anything, however, was better than its entangling perplexities, its labyrinthine wrongs, from which one lost the way out, from which one could never get free. And these wrongs not only entangled but ruined. Therefore he welcomed desolation. Desolation re-created him. And sometimes it promised him new fields of vision, which he scarcely dared contemplate now because the break with the past was too recent. Perhaps within himself he had already made the great decision, but he was unwilling to avow it even to his secretive self.

Traveling, swift moving ahead in space, was good. It brought

him the momentary illusion of getting away from unpleasantnesses. It brought a brief cessation from responsibility. It was an uninsistent decision. It freed him from people whose presence he more and more avoided. It put him out of reach, too, of Count Benkendorf and Arakcheiev. The relief was so great it was like a sad kind of joy.

The harvests in the lonely levels around him had been gathered. Here now were only dying colors, the echo of a sad, a sterile summer; an ending, not a beginning. The sky was cold and radiant. It had that immobility, that clear, wide-eyed waiting, which are heralds of winter.

Day after day he watched idly, almost indifferently, the wind run over the rollicking dry grasses that bent so gallantly. Something just as imperious, just as invisible, was driving him on. Day after day on this long drive to the southward, the early evenings of autumn spread their rich light about his erect, lonely figure with a strange regret. Day after day they shed the long, oblique splendor of their gold upon him.

Because he could not sleep, they started each morning early. Sometimes the little, ungrown moon, pale and livid, looked down upon him before the dawn. Sometimes the white, wild-flying splendor of the rain whipped his face. He liked its cold, brief touch. Or, in the late afternoon, great, glittering, gray-edged storm-clouds lifted themselves above the desolation and swung across the blue. But instead of rain there came from them, usually, the chiller wind of autumn, with a touch of its shivering sadness.

The distance covered now was considerable. It was as if he had entered a different zone, a world of tepid, unimpaired, early autumn. Its paler radiance enveloped him. His senses expanded under the touch. The indestructible, the brutal calm of nature was swaying him. It was beginning to light far horizons of deferred hope.

The increasing distance from the hopeless human tangle which had smothered him gave him courage. The burnished levels caressed him. He began to exchange words occasionally with Volkonsky. It occurred to him at length that they might

ride together again the way they used to. The threatened crisis which had made him suffer seemed far.

Then the warm, forgiving South began, the Don Cossack country, with its late flowering, its canterbury bells, goldenrod, its black-and-white mottled butterflies; the Don Cossack country, with the breath of great rivers and a freer living.

CHAPTER XXII

TAGANROG

THIS was an unprepossessing place, Taganrog, which he had chosen. It was situated on the north shore of the Sea of Azov. It was lonely. It was isolated and unlovely. A deserted steppe spread behind it where the winds raced. In front of it spread a desolate water which was drying up and threatening to become land. It was a harsh and unpleasant change, indeed, from the alluring fertile Don country, with its song and dancing, with its profusion of wild, late flowers, its acacias, its sensitive aspen groves, its happy farming people, who cultivated successfully the peach, the chestnut, and the money-making white mulberry.

Taganrog, on its narrow projection of land, the sea on three sides, had been founded for an army post by Peter the Great, who had planned for it an ambitious future. It had only about one thousand houses, however, now, most of which were of stone. There were only two which were worthy of consideration: namely, the old Greek Monastery, which was not so bad to look at, and the comparatively recent, commercially ugly, Marine Hospital.

Along the one main business street, the little shops, which looked more like bazaars, they were so small, so dark, so crowded, were kept by enterprising Greeks and Armenians who had been doing a thriving business since the war. Ships from Marseilles, which usually were forced to anchor at some distance from shore, because of the shallow, reedy water, brought regularly to these little, dirty, ill-kept shops the luxuries of France, of Europe.

Light-draft sailing vessels, which could easily reach the land, did a brisk, money-making business in iron, in ship timber, in wool, which had come by way of the Don and the Volga, from the rich, unexploited Russian interior, and even from remote Siberia, and the Pacific. From here these natural products were sent on again to Odessa by sea or by caravan, and from Odessa to other cities which were centers of distribution, even as far as Constan-

tinople. Lonely Taganrog which looked as if it were in danger of being pushed into the sea, which was pummeled by the winds, was really important and energetic commercially. The great fleet of its light-draft sailing vessels went a great way toward provisioning the mountainous, occasionally snowbound, and always unfrequented, Caucasus.

The house Alexander had designated as the royal residence stood on the shore. It was so long and low, with so many little windows just alike on each side, that it recalled a rope factory. It had a yellow front and the roof was painted green.

The night he arrived a warm, black-yellow fog from the sea was creeping slowly in and enveloping lonely Taganrog. This gave it an uncanny, an unfriendly appearance. When he entered the house a faint, evasive perfume greeted him unpleasantly and made him think of his one other visit here some years ago. Grate fires made of *burrian*, the steppe weed used in place of wood, had been lighted to drive off the dampness, and the heavy atmosphere was forcing some of the smoke back again and down into the low rooms.

When he embraced the Empress, and the childish, trustful eyes, which were the color of forget-me-nots, looked up into his, he felt the old burden of the past, from which he hoped he had freed himself forever, fall back upon him. The restful change of the long journey with its free, diverting distances, with its great, winnowing winds, was annihilated in a moment. Here was the old Petersburg furniture, too! And the pictures! And as they sat opposite each other at dinner, here was the old dinner service of fine porcelain of Dresden, with the little round covers of beaten silver, recalling the tragic wrongdoing of the evenings of the past.

The house was filled with flowers in honor of him. The little friendly flower-faces of his rich gardens by the Gulf of Finland were grouped to greet him. His heart pinched with sudden pain at thought of how that garden of delight must be looking now, blasted and pallid, under the shrill winds of autumn.

And she was so unfeignedly glad to see him, the Empress, glad in spite of the past. A sort of divine, unearned forgiveness. It was as if he had returned, not from a long journey, but from

some more vital, perilous separation, of the heart, say, or the mind. It was her silent, unobtrusive celebration that the long agony with Marie Antonova was over. Her day had come, she believed. He was hers at last.

After dinner, in the room of the low ceiling and little windows that was used as drawing-room, where coffee was served, he felt this more keenly. And he suffered again to think that in her was unused, stored-up youth, while in him was the desolation, the experience won from disappointment, from unrestrained pleasure. He could not begin over again so easily.

There were yellow roses in the drawing-room because she thought he liked them. She believed that the Russian must have flowers about him. When she first came to live in the country, she used to declare that the passion for flowers proved the kinship of Petersburgers with the Orient. These yellow roses were just like those that grew beside the rustic bench where he used to sit with his daughter Sophie, in the sunny mornings, to await Marie Antonova's late, ill-tempered coming down to lunch with the wild fervors of a night of sin upon her. Fitfully, they flung the grief, the glamour of the past upon him. For a moment they smothered his senses. He thought of the wages of sin which one must keep paying and paying.

He sensed now, dully, that she knew about the present political unrest, the growing threats against the government and his own life, but that she would say nothing. She had learned well from him the habit of concealing what she thought. He knew, too, that she would stand beside him, proudly, bravely, and await any fate, even death. He admired this quality. It was royal.

There was something of pity, too, mingled with her happiness to-night, and vague, uncharted fears for the future. She believed, naturally enough, that the change she saw in him was due to the sudden wrench caused by the break with Marie Antonova and the unexpected death of his daughter. It was this grief that had changed him so. It was this grief that had brought him back to her at last, after all the years. He felt waves of self-forgetful pity touch him, while they were talking calmly of inconsequential

things, such as the visit of Constantine, his journey, the house, just as if nothing had happened. He estimated, on a sudden, the elevation of the nature of the woman who sat opposite, that was capable of sacrifice like this. But at the same time, this sacrifice, together with her childish dependence upon him, were riveting again those chains that bound him to the past, which he had been trying so hard to break away from, to be free.

Along with her *majestueuse tournure*, there was something about her now that was appealing, almost pitiful. A most astonishing combination, this. And this peculiar, grand indifference, too, which was the height either of the aristocratic idea or of personal fearlessness. They shook him. They made him feel contemptible, especially her superb giving-up of life. Try as he would, he could not get rid of the feeling.

And they were both so lonely. This bound them together. This made it tragic. His own personal peculiarities, his constantly changing mind, together with the persistent intrigues for their own ambitious ends of Arakcheiev and Photius, had resulted in his seeing seldom his boyhood friends. He was as isolated as a tree in a desert. There was nowhere he could turn for help, for support.

Her condition in this particular surpassed his own. Fate had willed it that the girlhood friends she had made when she first came were either dead or for political reasons living abroad where she never saw them, like Countess Tolstóy, as an example in fact. She had either not wished or not been able to make new ones. She did not care sufficiently for people. She had no interests left now but the carving of gems and her prayer book. The same force was operative in both their lives, namely, a force cutting them slowly loose.

No fiber of her being had taken deep root in this adopted land. She lacked flexibility, probably. She lacked interest, too. She was mentally incapable, for some reason, of transplanting. Life with her here, he reflected on a sudden with self-reproach, had been merely a proud, a lonely waiting for the end, *any end*. She had been an imposing figure in the past. Now she was becoming an appealing one.

If she still loved him, which he did not doubt, it was a love made up of too many renunciations, too many unsparing soul-disciplines to be humanly happy. It was made up of too many extraordinary qualities to be effective in the little, pleasant, careless round of every day. Both she and Marie Antonova marked two too far extremes to be reconcilable with comfortable living. They were two superb dissimilarities, each impossible in her way. He had not been able to reach the safe mean and hold it, which any commonplace man can do.

Like him, she did not care for her great position. She was tired of it. It bored her. She was held to it by loyalty to him. They were both of too elevated intellect to succumb happily, if foolishly, to its base, always selfish, flattery. They were not sufficiently plebeian to feel superior, flattered, by elevation. They despised the cringing courtier, who sought promotion by appealing to a sovereign's weakness. The petty, the illogical superiorities of place which please the vulgar, meant nothing to them. And both of them, without the exchange of a word to each other on the subject, were consciously confronting that changing civilization whose terrors Prince Metternich had pictured for them so convincingly. Now they could both see that what Prince Metternich said was true, that the sword of Napoleon had shaken to its foundation the old civilization in which they were brought up. They did not find within themselves anything left with which to face readjustment to the new. They did not pause to think whether it would be better or worse. They had no curiosity about its unexplored expansions.

But a ray of light, somewhat cruel though it was, suddenly shone for him. The invisible, subconscious current was still bearing him on. It occurred to him that her mother was living. She would be glad, indeed, to go back again to her girlhood surroundings, to Baden, and forget, if she could, in the atmosphere of home, the futile years between. It would be like beginning all over again, only in a safer *milieu*. But he would think no more now. He would let it all rest with this thought which he would not seek to probe.

When he said good-night to her, he put his arms about her

tenderly, with a kiss that seemed to ask forgiveness for the past, a lingering kiss, in which his regret for life was dissolved. He seemed more human, and not so exquisite, so remote. She felt that her silent, flowery celebration of his coming had been successful. She was happy. Like the child she was, she fell speedily asleep to the rhythm of the fog-covered sea.

CHAPTER XXIII

COUNT WORONZOW

THE next morning he breakfasted late with the Empress. Upon her face he saw that magic return of youth which happiness sometimes causes in women of great chastity in whom there is a fund of stored-up life. He was hers at last — all hers. No one could take him away from her. In her childish blue eyes shone the deep, trusting joy of possession. He wondered vaguely at woman's heart in which an indestructible spring seems to be waiting. He decided it was because they are a part of nature's creative plan.

After breakfast he retired to his improvised cabinet for a little while. He explained that he must look over some papers which were awaiting him. There were the usual long, detailed reports about the army of the South. There was a certain necessary redistribution of officers in question. This he put aside for the next day. He had stomach for only pleasant things now. He read carefully, however, the request of the citizens of Taganrog for the granting of a park and a garden to be used for band concerts and amusement. The citizens explained that they were needful because of the isolated situation and the lack of entertainment in this lonely outpost planted by the Great Peter. Then the petition went on to mention, more casually, the need of paving for the more frequented streets. The blowing of violent wind, the citizens urged, and the light, dry soil, not only caused the inhabitants to suffer from dust, but they were a menace to the general health. Likewise the people hoped that sometime he would be pleased to embellish their city with a royal residence. The only government building erected here for a great many years, the petition made bold to remind him, had been the Marine Hospital. The citizens felt that they had been neglected in the quick upspringing of new buildings on this wave of material prosperity which had followed in wake of the war.

Another paper, which he did not read through just now, because of his temporary giving over of government affairs, referred to the astonishing increase in crime of all kinds, not only in Petersburg, but in the other large cities of the realm. There was added, by way of proof, a list with explanatory details. The implied suggestion, of course, was, that a sterner hand at the helm of state was needed. He did not read this to the end. It promised too many unpleasant disclosures.

He turned with pleasure to a long letter from Prince Metternich, written to the Empress just the week before, to wish her speedy restoration to health in the South. At the same time it informed her that one of his super-spies, by name Châli, an Oriental whom he had employed for years to report to him conditions in various countries, would probably reach Taganrog during Her Majesty's visit, preparatory to a journey through Russia. It was necessary to reinvigorate her health, he explained, by the dry, cold breezes of the steppe, after several seasons spent in the enervation of an African climate — Algiers. His chief object in mentioning her name, however, was because he recalled His Majesty's fondness for music, when he had once had the honor of entertaining His Majesty in the Castle of Troppau. Châli was a violinist of ability. She would, of course, be at the disposal of Their Majesties, in case they found Taganrog dull after the gayety of their luxurious Petersburg. He went on to state that in Africa she had acquired a repertory of African music which he thought they might find not only unusual but enjoyable. Then he chatted lightly, as was his habit, of European affairs, in that charming manner which made politics read like a romance. After finishing the letter, which was long and apparently confidential, Alexander felt the little *frisson* of happiness which contact with the mind of Metternich gave him. He approved of this polished affability which disguised unpleasant facts. He wished it could be found more frequently.

He was just going to send word to the Empress to prepare for a drive of inspection through Taganrog, when to his astonishment Count Woronzow was announced.

The old man entered hastily. He was covered with dust. He

was weary. Evidently he had driven at speed throughout the night. They embraced with the cordiality which testified to their trust in each other and to their long acquaintance. Alexander looked lovingly at the short, undignified figure, with the furrowed brow and dull, deep-set eyes, the ugly body that gave no hint of the inspired, noble soul that dwelled within. A second glance told him that the old man was suffering, that he was restraining with difficulty some painful emotion. But strange to say he did not sense the message.

"Are we alone, Your Majesty?"

Alexander hastened to assure him that they were.

Stealthily then he drew his chair a little nearer. A cloud of yellow dust flew from his traveling coat, which he had not taken time to remove. The urgency, evidently, was great. "I have just discovered —" Here his voice shook so he was forced to pause. Emotion overcame him. Alexander waited, his face betraying no impatience. "I have just discovered —" The dull eyes looked up at him with a dog's faithfulness and love. "— *A plot* — against your life. Forgive me the necessity of uttering such treasonable words!" Here he crossed himself fervently.

Alexander turned white. Not with fear, be it said, but because that crisis which had made him suffer, and which he had crossed Russia to get rid of, had found him here. Evidently he could not escape it.

"I did not pause to eat, I did not pause to sleep, after I heard it. I left Odessa within the hour — to be the first to warn you."

Again Alexander turned white. This did not deceive the old man. He knew that the physical courage of the man opposite him was as great as his own. Had he not been right by his side in the Battle of Nations, fought under the gates of Leipsic, when for four days and four nights not once was Alexander out of range of the guns of Napoleon? To the falling bullets he paid no more attention than if they had been hailstones. He and Alexander were blood-brothers. They had been baptized in flame together. Both were indifferent to death. Both believed sincerely that there is something better than life.

"Just what is it you have heard, Count Woronzow?" came the calm answer.

"The night before I started, two soldiers were overheard talking in one of the barracks. One was unfolding, *in detail*, the plot to shoot you when you make your first review of the troops here — out on the plain —"

"They wish the fate of my father, I suppose, to be mine."

"The one selected to do the shooting — is Colonel Pestel."

"Ah — yes — I know that sort of man. And his father, too!"

"It seems" — Count Woronzow continued — "that this first started in a society, a club of boyish poets. Then the poetry society gradually changed into a revolutionary society — just how I do not know. The object now is to exterminate the Romanoffs — make a republic here — In short, they plan a repetition of the French Revolution on Russian soil."

"No one can escape his sins!" exclaimed Alexander, crossing himself and recalling the murder of his father. He did not tell the old man, however, that he already knew about the plot. In this tragic moment the dominant trait of his nature, which was secretiveness, asserted itself. He did not tell him that he had heard it from many sources in Petersburg before he left. Nor did he confide to him the solemn warning of Constantine and his hasty journey from Warsaw.

"I came to offer my services — my influence — over the army of the South, as Your Majesty knows, is considerable," he added modestly.

"What do you suggest, Count Woronzow?"

"The sternest — the quickest measures!"

The face of the Emperor pinched suddenly with grief.

"I know —*I know* — your dislike — because of the nobility of your soul, to causing suffering. But here, *now*, is no place for yielding to personal inclination. Only duty can be considered, Your Majesty. Duty, and the saving of Russia, which means, too, the saving of the faith of Christ." Count Woronzow bowed his head. He crossed himself with deep humility, as if grateful for being permitted to give his life to such an undertaking.

"While unshaken power is still in Your Majesty's hands, before the disaffection in the army has had time to grow, to weaken you — you must strike. No matter what our hearts, what our consciences may say, we must strike. And it must be to conquer — *to kill* —" He added in a dull voice, "*It is duty.*" The ignoble little figure, seated in the low leather chair, looked almost majestic in the triumphant victory of his soul. "Once more, let me have the honor of leading Your Majesty's troops!"

Alexander was moved. He was swayed from the multiple clutch of his crab-like fears. With something that resembled the exaltation of the artist, his mind leaped forward to hold those heights of duty the old man pictured. Triumphant visions of victory touched him and for the moment lifted him out of his melancholy.

"You are right, Count Woronzow! We will proceed, immediately. It is the thing to do."

"The plotters, Your Majesty, must be ferreted out by spies. They must be sent then, *secretly*, to the mines. Over Russia, over Siberia, with the swiftness of magic, we must fling a network of informers. Then we will enlist the priests. Then we will enlist the newspapers. Then we will proclaim a holy war against the Turk — inflame the mind of Russia, in short, with patriotism. That will be useful. That will make people forget — and thus unite the race. We will save our country!"

"And Russia then shall acknowledge its debt to you, Count Woronzow, I promise you." Alexander was now enthused with the prospect.

"First, Your Majesty, send couriers to Petersburg. Arrest the young men of the societies. There is no time to lose. Every minute must count for us. Arrest the young men of the branches of these societies, too, in Novgorod, and especially in Moscow. In Moscow, you know, there is always too much daring thinking."

"I agree with you, Count Woronzow! That is the way to proceed. I agree with you heartily. It shall be done."

Relief was evident upon the old man's face. He had succeeded. In contact with the firm, quick power of decision of this stern

commander's soul, Alexander regretted the futile weeks of suffering, of trying to avoid the crisis. He would meet it now, bravely. He would make up for the time he had lost. What a relief it was — this decision — at last!

They talked then of various other matters. In the course of the conversation Count Woronzow hastened to inform him that Alexis Sergiewitch must not be numbered among the plotters, that he was loyal to the Emperor.

"He is too much of a butterfly, Your Majesty, to cherish political convictions. He is young and hot-headed, but his heart is not bad."

Alexander recalled on the instant the "Ode to the Dagger." He knew that it very likely had had a certain effect, and that effect not good. But he dismissed the thought as soon as it came, because he knew the writer was only a poet and not a political disturber. But the officials behind in Petersburg were of a different opinion. In addition they were angry personally, because of the sting of his bitter epigrams.

At length Alexander suggested that a room be prepared for Count Woronzow. He told him that the midday meal would be served shortly, and he hoped he would give them the pleasure of a visit. Count Woronzow replied that he wished merely to wash, to remove the stains of travel, in order to be presentable to meet Her Majesty. A room, however, was unnecessary, because he was returning immediately to Odessa. In the present unsettled condition, he could not afford to be away.

Count Woronzow greeted the Empress with something that resembled reverence. In more ways than one she represented his ideal woman. Various entries in his diary at this time go to prove it. She had most of the qualities he respected in women, and of which his own wife had none, whom for long, be it said, he had looked upon as his earthly cross. In addition to his respect for the Empress, he felt sorry for her. He had something of the sympathy that unites like to like.

Just before he drove away, he saw Alexander alone again for a few moments. Alexander renewed his intention of prompt action. Count Woronzow asked him for a definite plan of pro-

cedure. In reply Alexander told him to use his own initiative in Odessa and places under his immediate supervision. He added, however, that he thought best to set about it secretly. He explained that he would send on to him immediately definite orders.

When Count Woronzow, satisfied with the result of his visit, turned to take farewell of Alexander, he was startled by some change in the white face. It was almost as if he were paying his adieux to a stranger. He concluded that when he first reached Taganrog he had been so excited by weight of the news he bore, and so weary by the forced journey, that he had been in no condition to observe.

After Count Woronzow had driven away, Alexander and the Empress took their deferred drive through the unprepossessing streets of windy Taganrog. He did not refer again to the object of the old man's visit. He left her in the belief that it was merely a call of courtesy, made equally upon them both. She gained the impression that the interview had been merely one of pleasure. The manner of Alexander was happier than usual, lighter, and their conversation was care-free. They chatted easily. He asked her help in selecting a place for a park and for a public garden for flowers. This pleased her. She felt flattered. She enjoyed doing it. She felt that she was helping him, that at last she was coming into her own. She had always wished to be useful.

Above their heads as they drove through the one business street, with its ugly, flat-topped buildings, the signs over the shops displayed the world's most picturesque, ancient alphabets: Greek, Syrian (Arabic), and Russian.

There were noisy little wine-houses at intervals, where crowds gathered, and from which throughout the night ruddy, enlivening light streamed. There were rough groups of caravan drivers. There were boatmen whose cruel, pale faces kept startling Mongol traits, but whose half-naked bodies were hairy and blond. Among them were Black Sea pirates, bare to the waist, wearing tiny caps, that were perfectly round, on the backs of their heads. They were taking brief land-leave. They were rejoicing, with the

native population, in the present cheapness and abundance of food and wine. Russia was feasting. Never had the land been so well fed. There were dance-halls. There were gambling-resorts which were never closed. Black gypsy women were dancing in the street for money in front of some of them. There was more than a sprinkling of Asiatics. In short, there were the usual harsh, noisy contrasts of a lonely outpost.

They agreed at length upon the expediency of embellishing the city. The Empress suggested the adding of one or two public buildings. They talked freely, easily. There was no restraint. The rich corn country, back of the steppe, would warrant considerable upbuilding, Alexander thought, as if at the moment he had interest in nothing else. Gayly, out of words then, they built their toy city.

Just as the summer mornings he had spent with his daughter by the Gulf of Finland, in the flower-filled gardens, were the happiest period of his daughter's life, so were the next few days the happiest with the Empress, because such power of giving pleasure to others was his. In the glory and strength of his new-found decision, he was something as she remembered him in his happy youth, when, impractical, imperial dreamer that he was, he was sketching plans for the welfare of the world without taking time into account, or its destructive tides.

Happily, together now, they planned the freeing of the serfs, and the possible putting aside the burden of a crown, so wearisome to them both, in giving the country a constitution or a government after the style of the United States of North America. She felt flattered to be consulted like this. She was content. Since he had come back to her after the years, what else could matter? They were one in mind. They were living harmoniously in that brilliant-colored world of the imagination where no companion could be so delightful as he.

What she believed fondly to be his late refluence of love, of devotion to herself, was in fact the result of reconciliation in his own shifting, melancholy, restless mind of having been able to reach a decision, the thing he had struggled so long and so vainly to do.

He would show Russia that his hand could be stern, could be sure in its dealings when occasion demanded. He would show them that he was not so inferior to Peter. He confessed to himself now that he had vacillated too long. It was easy enough seeing as he did through the eyes of Count Woronzow. He was untroubled. He felt dominant and brave.

CHAPTER XXIV

ORCHIDS AND MUSIC

FIVE days passed. The promised order of procedure had not been forwarded to Count Woronzow. Neither had order against the plotters been sent to Arakcheiev or Count Benkendorf in Petersburg. The same was true of Moscow. Alexander had done nothing. The nation waited.

Each of those five days since the departure of the old man, he had felt that fine courage, that brave, independent initiative which he had imbibed sensitively from Count Woronzow's presence, slowly oozing. Each morning when he awoke he found that he had less than the day before.

He could not do it. Try as he would he could not force himself to set in motion that vast, that cruel enginery of destruction. The dumb impulses of his body fought against it. The deep undercurrent of his mind, flowing through him with the imperious necessity of his blood, forbade it. *"O! God, keep me from wrong! Do not permit me to set my hand to the murdering of men!"* he prayed.

Again that uncontrolled torrent of thought, of worry, was rushing destructively through his brain. Granted that it would be better for Russia, were there no personal rights of his own to be considered? Was it his duty for any man's say-so, however reliable, to mortgage his soul-welfare through vast cycles of living to come, by the act of murder?—recalling vaguely at the moment that majestic prohibition of Eastern thinkers, and the Christian prohibition, too: *Thou shalt not kill!* Was it his duty to do a thing against which his nature revolted? Would he not commit a greater crime if he did? His grandmother had been forced onward from crime to crime, from murder to murder, by so-called *political necessity*. In his boyhood he had begun, too, by being forced on along the same road, to sanction, namely, the murder of his father. That murder had embittered the years

between. It had shadowed his days. He would not be forced to it again. It was not his duty. There was a court of loftier appeal. He would not be the nation's royal, vigorously applauded executioner. He would not murder and then accept praise for patriotism. In the Napoleonic wars he had had enough of that. Great wars, it occurred to him with a lightning-like illumination of mind, not only sacrifice the lives of soldiers, but ultimately, too, with a crueler, a larger logic, the leaders on both sides, the victorious as well as the vanquished. It seemed to be an inevitable progression. In the slow subsidence of that gigantic confusion, no one goes unscathed, not even the victor.

With the feeling of impotence growing upon him, and with the great, yawning void of expectation calling him louder and louder, which was of men of the government, men of the army, men of affairs throughout the country who were awaiting his action, he became melancholy again. He was face to face with the crisis. He suffered. Fear, which is the child of suspicion and lack of faith, ultimately, too, of madness, increased. Daily for him, logically, slowly, it unfolded its unknown terrors. There were vague inquietudes which words might not express. There were troubled presentiments in the twilight. There was a new, unsuspected, latent hostility in people. Even the unyielding, harsh indifferences of material things began to impress him. Special sadnesses awaited him if the evenings fell with rain, or the warm, yellow fogs of the South in winter enveloped the land.

The Empress, however, saw and felt little of this. She was protected against impressions just now by her sudden, her newfound happiness. She was self-absorbed. He had come back to her after the years! He was hers. Nothing else mattered greatly. Suddenly, by a stroke of Fate, the obstacle to her contentment, her supremacy, had been swept away. The rays of this unexpected happiness which had just arisen blinded her to other things. Her unused life of suppressed youth burst into blossom like the flowers in some magic garden.

The meddlesome Metternich, the Continent's most accomplished mischief-maker, in his official cabinet in Vienna was almost as restless as Alexander. The silence in Taganrog was

worrying him. He was playing for the rehabilitation of the Hapsburg dynasty. It was weak. It needed time for restoration. In addition, as he saw it, it was now or never to save the ruling class. His strong will steeled itself anew for the task.

Daily, couriers brought him the same word from Taganrog. No change. From Châli likewise came this message. What if Alexander should make Russia free! What if he should give it a constitution! Then about his own ears would come the clattering ruin of his carefully erected schemes. All that he had worked for would be destroyed. His mental atmosphere resembled that which precedes a thunderstorm. To content himself a little in the weary period of waiting, he wrote notes to all the courts containing carefully guarded warnings against Alexander.

Count Woronzow was waiting, too. And now with apprehension. So were the state officials in Petersburg, in Moscow. They were upon the edge of a volcano.

Each one of these days Alexander walked alone by the shore of the sea for hours, just as Alexis Sergiewitch used to in Odessa when he was meditating running away from Russia. He recalled vividly what the Greek poets whose verses he had learned by heart in his childhood, Euripides in particular, had written about the sight of the sea, and its sound, banishing the grief of men. He wished pitifully that the miracle might be performed for him.

Sleeplessness came back to torture him. Night-long he heard the weeping of that somber Sea of Azov, where, as winter drew on, mists clung like the poised, sad approach of some other world. Surely nowhere else, he began to think dismally, do the dawns rise so solemnly. He read the Scriptures. He read the lives of the saints. He read Saint Francis of Assisi. Hours of the night he remained upon his knees in prayer — begging for guidance, begging for a way out.

Another thing that paralyzed in him the power of quick, of effective action, was that in most Russians there is a slight admixture of the fatalism of the Orient, that what must be *must be*. And just now Alexander was beginning to believe that determination for the future of his country no longer rested with him

alone; that these young plotting poets were the future, casting its shadows ahead. He was beginning to believe that they were the forerunners of an unreckonable uprising of the masses, *that new civilization of Metternich*, that in time was to destroy utterly the kind of life in which he had been brought up. This was fear enlarged a thousand fold and then generalized. So in addition to being unwilling to proceed, he felt helpless.

The old desire for travel, for swift moving across space, which was his way of meeting trouble, came. With him it was a sign of desperation. Just now it marked something resembling mental rabies, a disease. He could not oppose it. There was nothing to do but yield.

He informed the Empress, suddenly, and the members of his improvised *entourage* of the South, that he was going to make a swift visit of inspection to some of his Crimean cities, alleging various feigned necessities as immediate cause. Adjutant-General Prince Volkonsky, as usual, accompanied him. This time again they did not ride together. The Prince wondered at it.

First to Perekop he started, and insisting upon driving at a speed that astonished even Prince Volkonsky. Through Perekop, on its narrow peninsula, the little village founded so many centuries ago by the Tartars, the great highway leads straight ahead, like a road of conquest, to Crimean lands.

He did not see anything of the lovely, sun-warmed autumn country through which they were rattling with such speed, nor the gladness of the gay mirror of blue reflecting water beside him, his mind was so blinded by fears. He was swinging helplessly now to that fixed thought which sometimes heralds madness.

At Simferopol, another old Tartar stronghold, in which a more prosperous new Russian quarter was springing up with the rapidity of weeds in spring, and where mosque, synagogue, Greek Orthodox church, and a new pointed-topped Catholic cathedral rubbed elbows amicably, Prince Volkonsky fell ill. They were forced to stay over for two days. But the Emperor had no interest in the busy little place or its picturesque situation at the foot of a spur of those crumpled-looking Crimean mountains, nor its spacious gardens, now luscious with ripened fruit, where the

Sultans of the North used to live. He spent both days in the church in prayer. Both Perekop and Simferopol had been given to Russia by that virile, all-conquering grandmother of his, who above all things knew how to live.

They sailed across from Goursuf to Aluschta, an hour's pleasant sail if the wind is fair. Prince Volkonsky felt that he was in Italy. He was happy. A more charming place could not be imagined. Billows of conquest, for centuries, had rolled over this southern shore; from east; from west and south; Mongol, Tartar, Greek, Latin. Powerful, restless, rapacious races had ruled it. It was not impossible, indeed, that once here the soldiers of proud Justinian, with the golden eagles of Rome, had passed, and Prince Volkonsky tried earnestly to divert Alexander's mind by these poignant memorials of human history, and to suggest to him, from them, fresh plans for the expanding future. He observed that Alexander did not adequately estimate, or appreciate, the economic forces at work now, forces which were wholly disassociated from the moral world. But Alexander seemed neither to see nor hear what he said. And over his head here again the birds were singing, the same birds that used to scatter their songs so lavishly above that gorgeous garden by the Gulf of Finland. He did not hear them. They made him neither sad nor happy.

From Goursuf two highways lead. Alexander had no interest in either one of them. One leads through spacious lands belonging to Count Woronzow; the other through the estate of another Russian nobleman. The choice was made by Prince Volkonsky. He took the lower road. It led through the vine-lands where grape-pressers were working now noisily and merrily and where rich scents of wine were on the air.

Then the road led uphill, rather steeply for some distance, between rows of dust-covered, tall cypress-trees, where they could see, broader and broader, a stretch of water shine like silver. He had no more interest in the sumptuous crown-estate, Oreanda. He did not wish to visit it. He did not turn his head to look at it. Prince Volkonsky began to wonder again just what could be the object of this last, mad journey.

Each morning, when they started, very early, a transparent, blue haze was hanging over the vast water, while to landward spread the first wild rose of the sunrise.

Smiling, sheltered Alupka, the health resort, swung to sight. Near it Count Woronzow was erecting the famous Moorish palace which was intended to equal the Alhambra and become one of the world's wonders. Its park was of an extent, a luxuriance, both natural and cultivated, to dazzle even an Emperor's eyes. All along this alluring Southern shore in fact they found another summer, and at the same time something resembling the spirit of gay, sensuous Cairo, where pretty women who had laughing eyes wore the gowns of Paris. Here fruit that glowed like little round suns showed enticingly among the green gloss of leaves, and scents of late harvest came on the breeze.

Afterward came Sebastopol on its lofty cliff, and Balaclava, later to be battle famous, shutting in sharply a blue circle of sea with white sand that glittered like diamonds.

The drive from Sebastopol to Eupatoria, with its mosque and its whirling wind mills, on the homeward curve to the north, where the gigantic walnut-trees grow, is one of the loveliest in the world. It does not need to stand second where beauty is the question, if perhaps it must in grandeur, to that which Alexis Sergiewitch had taken across the wild Gorge of Dariel, in whose depths light died in the day, and where Caucasian eagles whirled. But Alexander saw nothing of it. It did not inspire him. It did not give him pleasure. He did not even look at the wonders the lavish world was spreading before his inattentive eyes. Prince Volkonsky was beginning to be worried in earnest. He could not guess the cause of this new, this unexpected strangeness, when everything seemed to be moving smoothly. He puzzled his head over it. He began to believe that Alexander's upbringing had been wrong. It had been in the hands of emotional priests and a dreaming philosopher. If, instead, he had had some scientific training, he thought, it would have helped to steady him, to give him a different outlook. Then he could have considered what happened in the world about him as some phase of growth, of

evolution. Instead of seeing everywhere *emotionally* either punishment or penalty, he would have viewed nature's uninterrupted progress.

Fresh life, increased commercial energy, was now flowing into these little cities of the South. He tried to make Alexander see it. He tried to show him what it meant for Russia. He tried to open his eyes to future possibilities of commercial conquest. This Crimean country, which is Russia's Italy, was just entering upon that heightened era of business development, of modern scientific exploitation of natural resources, in the way of mines, medicinal baths, fruits, wines, grain, leather, timber, which was to meet its first impetuous if temporary check, a little more than a quarter of a century later, with the breaking-out of the Crimean War. It was just getting in full and inspiring swing now. But the Emperor's mind was so swayed by gloomy presentiments that he could not see it.

Back in Taganrog the truthful, childish eyes of the Empress, which bound him to the slavery of the past, and were living memorials of his folly, his wrongdoing, awaited him. Back in Taganrog the invisible threads of fear, which made him helpless, miserable, were awaiting him, too, to make him a prisoner, to bind him again.

He had gained nothing by the journey. This time he had not found in it the temporary relief which usually resulted. His last pleasure was gone. The crisis still confronted him. And there was nowhere he could turn for help, either to personal friend or political power. He did not feel any too friendly toward England since her refusal of the last Russian loan. In addition, like Metternich, he disliked her Foreign Minister, Canning. He had a horror of his disrespectful, Irish wit. He could not rely upon Poland even with his brother as Governor. He knew too well the fickleness, the undependableness of the race. Spain and Italy had troubles enough of their own. Austria, he knew, was forced to cling closely to that necessary selfishness which is a part of weakness. There was nothing for him anywhere. He had lost even the power to hope. Only in some other world now could he live and find that happiness, *cette puissance de bonheur*, which

must be, to go on; some other world where an entirely different mental equipment was required.

Alone, in desperation of soul, he stood by the Sea of Azov, while about him spread the impalpable agony of the twilight, like a new, a strange land, stretching on and on. The last faint streaks of peach-bloom in the west had faded. Night was shutting down.

Suddenly in something the way that the drowning clutch at a straw, the letter which Metternich had written to the Empress occurred to him. Anything connected with Metternich was in the nature of a relief. He recalled his mention of that woman musician, Châli. In his increasing deafness the violin was the only instrument he could enjoy. He turned back toward the Residence. He walked a trifle more briskly than usual. On arrival, he dispatched an equerry to the low, square, somewhat isolated stone dwelling which was Châli's, to apprize her of his coming.

When she lifted her eyes from the customary reverence to royalty with which she greeted him, what seemed to her a figure of pity stood before her. This was no Moscow Tsar. He brought to mind the memory of Holy Men to which, in the East, she was not unaccustomed. He recalled slightly to her that marble face lit by the light of tapers, in the dim, old cathedrals of Italy, to which men prayed. Could this be the man, she asked herself in amazement, whom Metternich had declared must not go back to Petersburg alive? Was it for this, this unutterable thing, that she had left her happy living and come to Russia? To her swift-moving, figure-making, Oriental mind the man before her suggested a noble animal, wounded, at bay, with the base, yelping hounds of political envy, personal hatred, after him. By force of contrast Metternich occurred to her, and, in unflattering juxtaposition; an old, faded *roué;* a selfish, intellectual sensualist. She all but hated him. She had a dramatic moment of fierce, of angry revolt against the mission upon which he had sent her. Then the suppleness of her race proclaimed itself. Emotions change easily in the heart of an Asiatic. This stood her in good stead now. She would save him, some way or other. She would please herself and throw dust in the eyes of the mischief-making Austrian.

She would serve personal desires for once. Swiftly she regretted, as she stood face to face with Alexander, those informatory letters she had been sending to Vienna. She disbelieved now most of the things she had heard of him. Rapidly she reversed her opinions. She made new ones. All his ills she believed came from his superiority. The charm of Alexander which had been so fatally powerful over the hearts of people in the past was heightened now by his inaccessibility.

She sensed, suddenly, that some death-dealing blow had killed the living heart of him, until now it was merely a huge, an invisible wound. She knew that her, the woman, he could not even see. He had swung out beyond living, so to speak. Waves of self-forgetful pity began to sweep over her. She cursed futilely that twist of destiny that made her the slave of others.

But she would wait and see what acquaintance might disclose. There were weapons in her hands. She would know how to use them. She was quick to see. She was quick to act.

This, then, was the man whom the crafty diplomacy of Metternich had, for years, been pulling slowly down, from his great height of power, to ruin! This was the man in whose ear he had stood and whispered, to put shaken faith, distrust. First, he had worked to destroy his friendships. Then he had saddened his heart. At last he had made him lonely. Deep in the clear eyes she was looking into she could count all those accumulated disappointments.

Alexander, on his part, was confronted with a bare, dismal, ill-furnished room. The usual, red-flannel-framed bear-skins were on the floor. There were a few pieces of awkward, brown, leather-covered furniture made in Germany. The windows were narrow and deep-set. The ceiling was low. In one corner stood a medium-sized stove of painted porcelain. The walls were bare save for three great, wild, blossoming orchids from Africa, which kept a beauty in which there was something savage.

A magnificent figure of a woman, however, was bowing before him, tall, slender, with a small, round, smooth-shining, black head. He saw a pale face, amber-tinted, with arched, eloquent

brows. But the eyes impressed him most. In them he read connoisseurship of life, and in her heart he felt a touch of that intelligent pity which only the wounds of living can give. He recalled swiftly Metternich having said to him: "I have never loved anything base. I love iron and marble, but I could never love tin nor lead."

A voice that pleased her touched responsively her ears. "I am taking advantage, with your gracious permission, of Prince Metternich's invitation to hear you play."

"I feared, Your Majesty," bowing him to a seat, "that you were going to permit me the honor of being the first to announce to His Excellency the giving of a constitution to Russia." She would simulate frankness. She would strike with the suddenness of surprise.

"Would that be so bad?" — gently. The thought evidently did not displease him.

"Perhaps, for an old nation — far ahead in the future."

"You mean?"

"With your gracious permission, Sire, Russia is young."

"Cannot all people enjoy freedom?"

"A dagger is a dangerous plaything for an infant."

"You do not flatter."

"Russia is youngest of the nations. If the elders — France, England — have not dared try it, how could one less experienced?" Unconsciously the political faith of Metternich had become hers.

Alexander became thoughtful. His doubts came back. They were seldom but partially asleep. It took little to arouse them. She was probably right. His people were children.

"Sometimes, you know, the governing hand grows weak," was the gentle rejoinder.

"Freedom is for the chosen, Sire. It has nothing to do with the masses."

In the mood of despair that held him his subtlety was gone. Perhaps for the first time in his life he was frank. He wore no mask to-night.

"The one who governs has a harder time than the governed."

She saw he had no pride in his great position. The voice that moved her with its beauty was infinitely weary.

Vaguely, then, the memory brushed him of long years of wasted youth, of wasted love, with Marie Antonova, of whom he seldom permitted himself to think, when there were women in the world like this. Metternich was a good judge of many things; not only men — but women. Always the great statesman's power, his penetration, were substance for the storehouse of memory.

"And now is there to be a Turkish war, Sire?" — carrying on her beginning of undisguised frankness. In this she herself was interested. It concerned the people of her faith.

"There are always wars — or near — or far, it seems." He evaded for the first time.

"And Charles X, Prince Metternich writes me, is planning immediate invasion of Algiers" — thinking again of people of her faith.

The clear eyes looked across at her without particular interest. "Being ruler, you see, is not exactly what you might call a *divertissement*" — a faint shadow of the old enchanting smile caressing the corners of his lips.

Then, like an inspiration, the way out of it all, for herself, for her master, flashed before her. This was what Prince Metternich had so frequently praised her for, this vivid, this independent seeing.

"When one is tired of ruling, Sire, there is always the other life."

His expression changed instantly. "The *other life!* What do you mean?" The thought had occurred to him first, words bubbling up bravely from the depths of his spirit, when the death of his daughter automatically severed relations with Marie Antonova, and cut off the past. This was just what Châli was saying now. The words struck his ears with uncanny power and without personal volition.

"In the old world" — her voice was flowing evenly on — "the *East*, in short, kings used to put aside the crown for something greater — meditation, prayer — to live in solitude the

life of the mind. That was a stepping-up, Sire, not a stepping-down."

She saw the suggestion moved him. She began to understand why he was such a riddle to his contemporaries. It was because people could neither understand nor believe in nobility so great. He did not have the usual human equipment of pettinesses, shabby vanities, cheap cruelties which are so many overcoats against the storms of human happenings. Whirlwinds of thought swept through her. She pitied him. And the pity was mixed with something that resembled reverence. She had heard much of him, to be sure, from that astute judge of men, Metternich. But no word of his had reproduced the living man who sat before her.

Leaning toward him with supple grace, with sincere, eloquent eyes, Alexander saw a figure of charm, wearing draperies of soft silk the color of pimento splashed with sulphur yellow. "Sometimes, Sire, I have thought that the world has seen three supermen. Prince Metternich and I discussed it when I met him a little while ago by Lake Garda. It is one of his beliefs. Three supermen, Sire — Buddha, Christ, and Napoleon. I mention them in their order of birth. The latter gave his heart to conquest. His reward was comparable. The other two sought dominion over the world of the spirit. Their scepter of power was love. They have changed the minds of races throughout long periods of time, in a degree that cannot be estimated. Life has bent before them, Sire, like grain-fields before the tornado. And Buddha, you know, was first an Emperor. Beyond the circles of existence that we see, Sire, there are other circles. There is always something — *beyond*."

The thought she projected before his mind glowed with the savage splendor of those enigmatic flowers upon the wall that drew their substance not from the earth, but from the shining atmosphere. They represented a certain *fury of life*, its untamed persistence, perhaps. They were emphatic in assertion of its indestructibility. This was strength. This was courage.

She was sitting opposite him perfectly motionless, with the praiseworthy calm of the Moslem. But she was looking at him

with eyes in which there was sympathy and understanding. Something touched him which was grateful as warm sunlight after winter. It was pity.

But her mind was active. It was not motionless like her body. She had found in Alexander a mental quality she had met but once before, in her midnight visitor in the ruined palace of Bakshi Serai, a man without *self*, without greed. Perhaps this was a quality findable only in this vast country which she had not visited before, whose past had not been the same as that of Europe's.

He, on his part, was picturing busily those heights of prayer, of renunciation, which are greater than Tsardom. He was thinking that failure cannot exist for them who follow the way of the spirit. He was picturing — *that other life.*

When the silence had lasted long enough, she spoke.

"Shall I play for you, Sire?"

"Play, if you will be good enough."

She took her shining brown violin from its case. She tested the strings quickly with trained fingers. She took a position across the room, not far from where the orchids hung.

Then there burst upon the surprised senses of Alexander for the first time that astonishing music of the black races, that music built up by Nature's self, music at once wild and sweet, combining, as great art must, the friendly union of impossibilities. With imperious power of self-projection it promenaded before his bruised and weary senses that land of ruddy soil, burnished by prodigious suns, the background for life savage and free. Like his journey southward from Petersburg, with the winnowing winds about him, it refreshed him. It was that quick contact with the untamed from which he could draw courage. His bruised sensibilities were wrapped about deliciously with the concealing splendor of tone. He all but wept at the blessed relief it afforded. He sat dulled, the sting of misery lessened, under the protection which it gave him. It brought him temporarily that simulated realization of perfection of *milieu*, where alone he could succeed and be happy. It appealed to the hidden powers of his mind which misery had put to sleep. It released them. It made them

active. Beneath the magic of that leaping bow his grief, his agony, were impotent.

When she finished, he did not move nor speak. He hesitated to break the charm. When he arose to take leave, it was as if he were desirous of keeping intact the music's memory.

In parting, he bent over her hand with the old, inimitable grace which a lifetime at court had taught. Châli felt fleetingly, in her woman's heart, the fascination of that inscrutable smile. And then, like a vision, he was gone.

CHAPTER XXV

KUSMITCH THE MONK

On the night that followed, Alexander was making his deferred but long-promised tour of inspection of the new Marine Hospital. During his absence, on his journey around the Crimean shore, typhus had broken out and the number of patients was increasing alarmingly.

The obsequious, smooth-faced interne who accompanied him, took him first to the rooms where the newcomers and those less dangerously ill were kept, explaining, as they walked along between the beds, certain changes and certain planned enlargements of the floor-space which were desirable.

At length they entered the room of those who were most seriously ill, where the dimmer light and the weight of silence swept upon him suddenly a fresh conception of suffering, of human instability. Unconsciously he began to walk more slowly, to look with added sympathy, added comprehension, at the faces of those who soon would meet the Great Unknown, and for whom life was over. A depressing sense of its sadness, its impossible complexities, its futility, touched him. They walked without speaking, softly, between the long straight rows of little white beds, where the faces kept the same silence, the same monotony of suffering. Here the interne volunteered no explanations.

Suddenly Alexander paused. He looked down fixedly. The occupant of the bed was a sailor who resembled himself so closely, it was as if he were looking into the mirror. The interne saw the resemblance as soon as he did. Even his controlled face showed a trace of surprise. The man was younger, to be sure, but suffering had in some degree wiped out the difference in years. Alexander could not force himself to go on, so astonishing was this physical likeness. He still stood in silence and looked down at him. He felt that the interne was glancing stealthily first at his face and then at the face upon the bed, in order to compare them.

At length he signified to the attendant that his visit of inspection was over.

In the hall outside, he turned and said to him: "Will he get well — the young sailor?"

"No, Your Majesty."

"How long will he live?"

"Perhaps half the night out."

"Not longer?"

"Not possibly longer, Your Majesty."

Alexander became thoughtful. At length he remembered his companion again.

"It is time for you to be relieved from duty, is it not?"

"Yes, Your Majesty. But I am glad to remain if I can be of service to Your Majesty."

Alexander thanked him and dismissed him. Then he entered the small bare, receiving-room, which was empty now, and dimly lighted. Here the prolonged, low, growling sound of the night sea greeted him. It was like the hoarse song of some far ocean of eternity beating upon shores he could not discern. Dully he felt the power of its continuance.

He stood in the small, ugly room like one dazed. He looked about with eyes that did not see. A wild, a romantic idea, had flashed across his brain. In that dying sailor's astonishing resemblance to himself lay the long-sought way of escape. The crisis still confronted him. But he did not fear it now. He could escape it! He had found the way!

He did not wish to go back to Petersburg again. Too many tragedies, too many ugly memories were there. And he was not sure that he could go if he wanted to. For Russia to live on, to prosper, it would be better for him to die, *or to disappear*. What a reversal of his old dream of world dominion was this! The mass of the people were in just the same mood now as the Roman populace used to be before the gladiatorial games. Something must be thrown to them to appease them — a human sacrifice — just as in Cæsar's day a life must be flung to the mob to keep it still.

For the few black hours of the night that followed now, his

will would be supreme for the last time. For the last time, "*So be it—Alexander,*" would work the old magic of command. He would have the dead sailor's body substituted for his own. He would seemingly die, and then disappear. A messenger to the Greek Monastery would bring immediately to the Residence for him a monk's robe. He would put it on. *And then*—

Despite the misery that had gripped him so long, a pale, far dawn was beginning to rise, and for him. It held promise. It held the promise of that *other life*, which is greater than Tsardom, which Châli had pictured and which the magic revealing splendor of music had presented as relief to his despair. He returned to the Residence speedily and alone, to hasten his plan to execution.

Here, in his improvised cabinet of the low ceiling and little windows all around, he could still hear outside the weeping of that somber Sea of Azov, like an accompaniment that might not be stilled. It was urging him on and on. Through his brain moved the summed-up deeds of that fated race of which he was born. Father had murdered son; son, father; brother, brother. And he himself stood guilty among the rest. He longed to get away from it all, the regretful memory, the sickening homage, the tinsel splendor, the base intrigues, the foolish pomp, and his own peculiar but uncontrollable contempt for his fellow-men, the bitter knowledge that to wish well to the world, to will its betterment, or to work for it, may bring results as pernicious as crime. In addition, the heart of him was dead. Grief, melancholy, betrayal, ingratitude, had dealt the blow.

A world that was not like his ideals, and could never be now, must be governed in a different way. It would be better for it to be governed by some one else. Life was forcing him every day to act the lie, to deny his convictions, to be false to his ideals. The new world which was just arising to confront him with such sharp surprises, with such harsh dissimilarities, after the Napoleonic wars, had nothing whatever to satisfy his poet's dream. It was soulless. It was prosaic and unpicturesque. It would become increasingly vulgar, increasingly plebeian.

That new word found in the days of the *Terreur—Justice*—

which men had not dared to use before, was capable of terrific expansion. It meant, in the end, the doing-away forever with the civilization which he had known. The political ideal of humanity was undergoing a change. And it was a disturbing *basic change* of structure. He sensed before him prophetically vast spaces, which only the distant future could people, the background for some far but very different *period of time*. What a vision spread before his eyes — the vast spiritual crumbling of an order of living which it had taken nearly two thousand years to build up and to maintain, the best that man had known. People were beginning to *dress* for that change even now. He had seen it in the cities. He had seen it in the villages. Their clothing indicated the banishing of servility. They were wearing coats and dresses not made solely for pleasure, for frivolity, for the gratifying of kingly eyes, but for *usefulness*, and inaugurated by the Great Revolution. Not alone their minds had changed! The mental change was translated into daily living. Their bodies would change, too. Under the rule of the masses, the unaccountable but inevitable intermingling of blood, those nobly formed, aristocratic bodies of the past would disappear. The repeated admixture of base blood would gradually thicken the ankles. It would coarsen, make less flexible, the wrists. It would blur the features. It would take the long, silky length from the hair. It would shorten the long neck, suitable for command, disdain. It would change round bones to square. It would thicken, shorten, hands and feet. The changes upon the mind would be even greater. It would make plebeian. In the same degree it would change the spirit. In short, the fine, highly specialized race with which he had been reared would now slowly disappear. It would be gradually transformed into a *useful race*. The fine breeding of the human flower, merely for display purposes, to perpetuate the aristocratic ideal, would cease. Already wild hopes, which he believed the future would fulfill, were dancing like gay soap-bubbles before the brains of the poorest, the humblest. And what furious, pent-up determination there was in the mob to possess, to enjoy! He trembled at the thought. It would be the swine let in upon the gardens, the flowers, the fruit. When the last

barrier was down, what would it do to the stored-up riches of the past?

Above the materialization, the grossness, of the pagan world, Beauty had arisen to dominate, to uplift, to console. And later still, to shine above the Dark Ages, had come Love, *the Christ*, to make beneficent, to make pitiful. In the far future, what new sun would rise? Above that struggling, noisy, onrushing sea of the masses, which Prince Metternich, for his own selfish ends, had just pointed out to him, and which, since, he had seen better and more prophetically than his Austrian guide, what new form of consoling superiority would come? Would there be some new nobility of the future? Would there be another room built on to the human mind to house some fresh ideal?

He was forty-eight years old. He was vigorous of body, young, as years count. But mentally he was an old man. He had lived too much. He was disenchanted, worn out, weary. The body, still young to look upon, clothed scornfully this ageing soul.

To get away! To get away! This was his only thought. To substitute the dead body of the sailor, who looked enough like him to be his twin, for his own body, and then to escape in the disguising garb of a monk.

He longed for the primitive things, things not connected with the life of man, the things that heal; the sincere, the unspoiled. He longed to bathe his soul in the silences of an untenanted land. He longed for the healing of lonely forests, for winter, and for dull waters unspotted by activities of commerce. He longed for the peace of spirit that is born of solitudes. He longed for freedom from false, cringing, self-seeking, treacherous courtiers. He longed for prayer.

There was nothing the material world could give him. He had had it all. And his impression of it now, in this moment of farewell to the past, to power — in retrospect — was as of innumerable fetters that bound. Only in the possession of nothing was there peace. By prayer, perhaps, he could avert the curse that had fallen upon the Romanoffs. By prayer, perhaps, he could set others free.

To be free! Free as the birds are free! To be able to behold

with self-forgetful rapture the pure sky of space which the hand of a Creator had unrolled above his head. To have time to look with care, with scholarly pleasure, at the little blowing grasses of the fields, at the flowers upon the steppe. To idle in the out-of-doors as scientists, as artists idle, with wise, kind, sensitive eyes. To be free from responsibility over the lives of men: their punishing; their guiding, which had tortured him so. To be unobserved. To be closer to his fellows. To be unenvied. To be unhated.

No more to meet betrayal, disillusion! To have nothing either to preserve carefully or to conceal. To be unattached. To own a few of the humble privileges that are the inalienable right of man, but which he had not been able to get hold of or to keep. To come back, in short, to the race after his long, sad, lonely exile of namelessness, which had been kingship.

He was born a king. And he looked a king, in height, in grace of body, in beauty. But the mind of him was not formed for a king's iron, irksome tasks. Napoleon was not born a king. He was of humble birth. He was inferior in stature. He was not much taller than a child. But the mind of him was kingly and iron-armored for the task. And then — who could tell? — in years of solitude, of prayer, of meditation, what far boundaries of realms spiritual he might reach! Who could foretell what undiscovered springs of love, of wisdom, of spirituality, unfettered as he was by pride, by earthly *impedimenta*, and thus enabled to progress, he might reach?

In all abnormalities there is power, because of concentration, because of the yielding-up of the little things that go to preserve balance. Who could estimate how much of the added power born of chastity, the mental, the spiritual, born of renunciation would come to him? With this power intensifying throughout the years he might purchase pardon for his family, peace for his people; and who could measure what divine compensation for himself? What gift of health, of healing?

Prince Metternich's vivid picturing of a changing world, and his own growing belief in it, that new, that different civilization that was on the way, had impressed him sadly. It had inspired

him with fear. It made him long to avoid it. There was nothing within him now with which to adapt himself to the new. He belonged to the old. Despite the splendor of his body, its suitability for the picturesqueness of pageants, his mind had grown antiquated. It belonged to the past. An enormous mental evolution was in progress. Vast visions were piling up like storm-clouds in the minds of humble working-men. A fatal, an imperious leaven was at work. It was not easy for the best minds to digest so much new life, so much new thought, now flowing into the world. The uncommon receptivity of the Russian mind made Slav lands more restless, more dangerous.

Most changes in his realm had been caused by lack of money, shortage of food, unpopular governmental measures, real or fancied oppressions. This was something different. It was not the result of financial bankruptcy nor an increased money shortage, which makes people restless, unmanageable. It was just the opposite. It was a world in ferment. It was a world busy in adjusting itself to more commodious living. Old horizons, which once seemed fixed, had expanded, not contracted. The material splendor of life which had in the past belonged only to the ruling class was now threatening to belong to all. There could be but one *first* result: turned heads, reasonless folly, widespread madness. Then change of opinion as to the worth *of the individual.* A new equality would be born.

Changes of government before this had been brought about by his own class, the nobility. This was the first time the *people* had presumed to meddle. This made it more dangerous. It was the beginning of taking power from the hands of the ruling class. A perilous beginning. These crude, these upspringing people from below would be hard to deal with. They would have voracious appetites for former prohibited things, such as posts of honor, adulation, ease, luxury. It would equal the thirst of the desert for rain. It would be swine at the table of kings. The changes of the new cycle would be fearful. They would be unguessed. There would be a vast sweeping-away to make room for the new. There would be neither respect for nor knowledge of the old. It would be a world in which art would temporarily perish and

merely the economy of material domination remain. It would be a world in which *the little flowers of Saint Francis* would be things of ridicule.

Alexander, with his excessive sensitiveness, his delicacy of perception, saw prophetically the social *débâcle* that was on the way. He felt the first cold, changing wind-breath of the changing world, where there would be less fineness, where courtesy, kindliness, friendship, would perish until the words were all but obsolete.

Soon the *élite*, with its high ideals, its specialized living, its nobility of blood, of training, purchased by the slow refining, the sure selection of centuries, would be no more. The horror which the leveling must bring! He could not meet it. In the new civilization there would be no place for fine emotions, useless fervors. There would be no self-forgetful sacrifice of any kind, because no one would make bold to claim for himself so much squandered, if resplendent, life of the soul.

His melancholy saw humanity as a mighty, onrushing tidal wave, with new beliefs, less heart, less pity, less soul-nobility, but armed with a fury of earth-exploitation, of material development, and lighted perilously by the fearless, far-seeing, electric eyes of science, rolling onward with an incomparable totality of destruction, over the old world of gentle, tender things which the love of Christ had implanted in the heart of an earlier generation. It would sweep it all away, with the weapons of science, man's intellect grown cruel, grown destructive.

Nor would it rest content with the plunder of earth. It would leap at the heavens with the released power of man's limitlessly developed, fearless brain. And then across at the stars. Little man would become the monster of the future. But the tender, tortured heart of him clung to the old.

He alone of that old world that was passing, passing under the rush of war, and the pouring-in of new ideas more destructive than war, was left to preach love, to preach prayer, to preach penitence.

These alone, he believed, could calm the rough waters of anarchy, rebellion, and hinder the social disintegration that was

threatening the world. He longed to bring to the brains of men again a vision of love, of unselfishness, a realization of the duty of all for shepherding. Perhaps behind this act of his a future of higher promise lay hidden. Not yet, he thought, has the modern world created a symbol for love, for joy, because its ideals are dead.

Two days later, just as the pale December dawn was breaking over the first light, dusted snow-fall here in the South, a band of pilgrim monks passed. A tall, lithe figure, wearing likewise the garb of a monk, came swiftly from the door of the Residence and joined them. The figure walked with a glad, free motion, like a young god breasting the dawn! When the leader of the band told the newcomer, who said his name was Priest Kusmitch, that they were bound for Siberia, he was happy. Something like song arose in his heart: *To the East! To the East* — that still kept belief in the things of the spirit. Away for a while from that onrushing, tidal wave of the masses, that sad, uncomfortable, disconcerting, new civilization in which the great individual, the significant personality, must disappear, drowned, obliterated, and only the rabble be left.

By the wings of his heart Alexander had lifted himself to that impersonal height of human intellect, the greatest of all, which is renunciation.

He went forth with no sense of defeat, but instead with truimph. Was he not bearing away to safety, holding it clean above the rabble where onrushing destruction could not touch it, the only thing left of the old life he had known that was worth while — *its faith?*

To the East! Now Tsar no longer, but merely one of the Carnival of Time, keeping the appointed way.

Against the background, wrought dramatically of blood and gold, of Russia's brutal past, its twisted history of torture and cruelty, moved now this noble, priestly, gray-clad figure, plastic with pity — *free at length* — the last Disciple of Christ.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE NEWS

ANOTHER year had come to mark the stay of exile in Mikhailovsky. Alexis Sergiewitch had watched the pink, red-gold burnish of another autumn grow pale and paler upon the unlimited leagues of barren fields that spread their restraining circle about him, until again the deep, forgiving snows of January had come, and covered them. The autumn had been peculiarly lovely. It had been long-drawn-out, radiant, with days and days of yellow sunshine, with petulant puffs of wind almost vernally warm and sweet, until November. Yet the birds had migrated early, strange to relate. They hardly waited for their usual fill of rich, reaped food from the yellowing stacks and abandoned gardens. The cuckoo, which cannot endure a moment of cold, took wing the last of August.

As he observed critically the marks of the decreasing sun and the changing season, he began to remember, with a sort of hopeless, heartbreaking regret, the lovely semi-tropical valleys hidden away so cozily among the lofty Caucasian Mountains, as they had looked to him, in spring, where blossomed the azalea, the rhododendron, jasmine; the fig-tree, the almond, and the peach. He recalled, too, the superb, the ancient forest of Georgia. Oh! to be back there again! Oh! to be under the soaring eagles, under the keen light above the summits that cuts like a knife!

Then he set himself resolutely to work, because life was peaceful here now and well ordered, and he was happy enough. "Boris Godunof" was all but finished, and the long verse-novel, "Eugène Onégin," was progressing well. In "Onégin" he had been sketching, just as the plastic artist with his brush sketches, the unsettled Russia of his time, and life on a lonely estate in the country. He was beginning to see the Russian landscape as something good to look upon, and he was the first to try to reproduce it with words. He was making marvelously clear and lucid pictures of his surroundings.

There is no other lyric verse in the world that resembles that which he had just been writing. There is no denying the fineness of its quality. And yet it keeps close to the ground like the light butterflies. It breaks tradition. It makes no attempt to reach the height of the birds. It is, in a way, the poetry of things as they are. It has none of the fantastic, imaginative visions of Germany. Nor has it the proudly reasoned, logical structure of France. It reveals the unknown, unexplored soul of a youthful race.

The family were still away. He heard from them even less frequently than of yore. Months went by without a word. They had been to Petersburg. They had lived upon one of their other estates for a time. Now they were back in Moscow for another winter of pleasure.

The letters of his sister Olga, rare as they were, were less communicative. They seemed sad. Evidently she was not in the mood for letter-writing. She had hinted once that her marriage was being considered, because of the family lack of money. He gained the impression that she saw nothing else to do than sacrifice herself to help pay the accumulating debts. Leo, the brother, was doing nothing, as usual. He was sinking daily nearer to the level of a drunkard. His father continued to lose large sums at cards and to dissipate uncaringly. His mother was trying to rival in lavish dressing and entertaining some of the princely households of Moscow, such, for instance, as that of Prince Bagration. This necessitated not only large but constant outlay. His father attributed the present money shortage, the continued unemployment of his brother, to Alexis Sergiewitch having lost imperial favor and thereby injured the family. If a rich marriage could be arranged for Olga, and speedily, it would be helpful. It was her duty, of course, to sacrifice herself for the others. With this partial information, somewhat grudgingly given, or sadly, letter-writing from his family had come to a standstill. His mother intended to write, but it was not easy for her to find the time. The fine, calm mood was still his, however, and the controlled, powerful writing. He was contented enough, although he was shut off from the rest of the world.

From reading the Bible he had progressed to the lives of the saints, and then to the ascetics whom duty dominated. Arína Rodiónovna still told him stories at night when the storms raged and shrieked and he was restless like a little child, filled with fear, and could not sleep. She improvised rich, magic romances out of the varied past of Russia, of Peter the Great, of Mazeppa who rode bound to the back of a horse with the wolves at his heels. She related with relish incidents in the life of his great-grandfather, Ibrahim Hannibal, the Abyssinian negro who had not only been the pet of the Great Peter, but lover of a great lady of France, and who married a blond princess of Russia. No romance could equal his life. And she embroidered it gayly with her unrestrained fancy, until her listener all but choked with delight.

He began to plan the long narrative poem "Pultava," which has Peter and Mazeppa for heroes. He saw richer and richer material in the history of his land, impelled by the old nurse's peasant vision, and whose spoken tongue in its flexibility, its richness, she and his maternal grandmother had taught him.

The third week in January a *kibitka*, with two horses, drove up noisily to their unvisited door. It had come from a long distance judging from the appearance of occupant and horses. At sight of it Arína Rodiónovna began to cross herself rapidly. When the occupant came into the house, he proved to be a servant, Sasha, of Schukowsky. After pulling off his protecting outer coats, shaking off the snow, warming himself, putting his huge striped mittens to steam upon the stove, he gravely held out two books to Alexis Sergiewitch. They were an arithmetic and an old Russian grammar by Lomonossov. Alexis Sergiewitch looked the surprise he felt.

"Did he send no letter?"

"No."

Alexis Sergiewitch began to understand. The books were merely the pretext of coming. Both were safe books. This meant that the censorship was heavy. He must have some other message to deliver by word of mouth, remembering relevantly the trouble that had come from his own innocent letter sent to

Schukowsky from Piatigorsk, and which had not reached its destination.

"No letter — you say?"

"No. He sent only the books. But he told me to tell you of the outbreak."

"What outbreak?"

"The societies — of young men. Revolutionary, *he said.*"

"When was it?"

"Christmas Day."

Alexis Sergiewitch sat down quickly. Arína Rodiónovna looked across at him understandingly.

"I saw it! I was there, in the Square — all the time."

"What happened?"

"They tried to kill the royal family — take over the government —"

"Tell me just what you saw! Tell me what you know!" — in a strained voice, whose tone was not lost upon his old nurse.

"Well — Mouravieff-Apostol — both of them — Pestel, Kakhovsky, Bestushew, Ryleiev — and some more, had influenced the regiments to revolt. They had marshaled them in the Great Square of Saint Isaac's, just back of the statue of Peter the Great. They were ready. They were waiting, to charge upon the Palace — to make its inmates prisoners. But Prince Troubetzkoi, who was to lead them, because he was a prince and they thought the soldiers would obey him better, *did not come.* So they waited — *and waited* — The soldiers became restless. In the meantime they killed the Governor of the city —"

"Milorodovitch?"

"Yes."

"*Milorodovitch!*" exclaimed Alexis Sergiewitch, turning white, knowing that it was partly this man's influence over Alexander and the others that had kept him from being sent to the Monastery of Solovetz.

"Yes — *they killed him.*"

Alexis Sergiewitch groaned.

"But Troubetzkoi did not come. Still they waited — *waited* — I saw it all. I was right there! I had just been sent on an

errand by Vassili Andrejewitch, when I found myself in this crowd, which was growing larger all the time. There was no way for me to get out of it. So there I was!"

"What happened next?"

"The old Metropolitan of Petersburg, Seraphim, and the Metropolitan of Kiev, who happened to be there on a visit, followed by several diakons, came out of the cathedral. They saw the crowd. They hoped to calm it. They tried to disperse it. They had on their state robes of gold, *crown* — and everything — They held up crosses covered with jewels, which sparkled in the sunlight. They started to chant a prayer. But the crowd of impatient soldiers began to curse them. Then they flung dirty snowballs at them. They drove them back — and out of sight. What do you suppose happened then, little master?"

"I don't know" — in a voice that trembled.

"Nicholas, on horseback, accompanied only by Prince Michael, *and unarmed*, rode right up to the revolting soldiers and *faced them*. He defied them! I saw him."

"Where was the Emperor?"

"How do I know?"

"You sheep's head! *Where was Alexander?*"

"He was not there."

"Of course, you fool! You said that before."

"Did I?"

"*Where was he*, I ask you?"

"Gone."

"*Gone where?*"

"Gone away! How should I know?"

Alexis Sergiewitch cursed and ground his teeth. He was so worried, so puzzled, he did not know what to think. No news came here. Winter and distance had cut them off from the world.

"Kakhovsky," Schukowsky's servant was explaining, "had promised to shoot him."

"Shoot *whom?*"

"The Emperor!"

"*You fool, you!* You said the Emperor was not there!"

"So he spurred his horse and rode right up to meet him."

"Whom?"

"Nicholas!"

"Kakhovsky held one hand, the one with the revolver, hidden in his coat. Nicholas looked him calmly in the eye and demanded, 'What do you bring me?' And Kakhovsky could not even look at Nicholas, not to mention kill him. He just turned his horse around like the dirty coward he was and *sneaked away*. They do say, though, that not even a wild beast can look into the eyes of Nicholas — they are so terrible. They are not a man's eyes. For years, Schukowsky said, Kakhovsky had been leader of the plot to kill him. He had sworn to do it!"

"That was a royal thing, Nicholas confronting an army in revolt, come to kill him!" thought Alexis Sergiewitch dully. Aloud he made no comment. He was overwhelmed with emotion.

"I saw Nicholas myself. I was not far away. I tell you he looked as big as three men, *every bit*. He was the size of a whale — no stretching it."

"Who could withhold admiration from Nicholas!" he thought. *Kakhovsky!* He had always disliked him. He had always known he was a cowardly braggart. They should have known better than to have trusted Kakhovsky. If there had been anything in him at all, when he rode, armed, to meet Nicholas, the Decembrists would have triumphed and Russia been saved, and free.

Yet how could they triumph at the first attempt? he meditated. History does not record such things. The past must count in all men. It is the past that has built up the present. Result must first have cause. The poor little Decembrists had not known anything but an autocrat's will; nor their fathers before them. In their inherited blood was the suppressed memory of yielding, of undertakings begun and failed, of domination. They wilted at the approach of Nicholas despite all their proud boasts of despising imperial power. They were routed at the mere sight of him who was born to rule. They could do nothing but yield. With heartbreaking clearness he saw it all. These brilliant young friends of his, dreamers, artists, poets, who had some of the magic technique of veterans in word-craft, knew

nothing about war. They were just interesting, grown-up children whose heads were filled with generous, fantastic fervor. The example of Napoleon and contact with France had unsettled them, but it had not given them any military experience. And that eloquent, fiery-tongued, dissension-breeding Pole, Mickiewicz, who had remained so long in exile in Petersburg, had helped to unsettle them more and more.

The servant of Schukowsky broke in upon his meditation. "I began to crawl back toward the edge of the Square, where the women and children, accidental passers-by, and foot-goers were grouped. I was frightened. I knew I had n't seen the worst.

"Then I heard a clattering of horses' feet. I looked. I heard a great rushing. From behind one corner of the Palace swept Count Alexis Orlow, shining like a sun. He was commanding the Horse Guards. They were all in full regalia. In the snow light their buttons shone until they put your eyes out. They dashed into sight, the great Orlow leading, so swiftly you could not take it in. They drew up in form by the Emperor."

"You blockhead, you said it was Nicholas."

"*So it was!* They protected him. It was a splendid sight. You should have seen the princely Orlow. I tell you the effect of what he did was tremendous! When I described this to Vassili Andrejewitch he exclaimed: '*Again an Orlow has saved the throne!*'

"Then Nicholas turned to his aid-de-camp of the day, who happened to be Suhozanet. He pointed to the cannon. He commanded: '*Fire!*' Suhozanet gave the order to the man in charge of the first cannon. He passed it on to the others. But there was n't a sound. *Not a sound!* A second time Nicholas signaled his aid-de-camp. A second time he gave the command. This time an answer was brought back: '*But they are our own people, Sire!*' pointing to the Square black with the crowd.

"Not a muscle of the face of Nicholas moved. He gave the order again: '*Nicholas commands you to fire!*'

"Then the cannons burst forth. They mowed the people down just as the scythe mows the yellow wheat in August. Ten times Nicholas repeated the word: '*Fire!*' Ten times the cannons burst

forth. There was no resistance. They were just as helpless as the wheat. He sat there like a statue. Just as motionless! Just as heartless! He slaughtered them until he himself was sick of slaughter. But his face looked just the same. Just as if he saw nothing at all.

"The snow in the broad Square of Saint Isaac's was crimson as velvet. The cries of the dying became louder than the roar of the cannons had been. The cold increased the suffering."

The picture with all its frightful details flashed before the brain of Alexis Sergiewitch and made him suffer.

"*Poor little figures!*" he cried aloud, covering his eyes with both hands, trembling, as if he would shut out the picture.

"*Poor little figures*, crushed and crumpled, with the infinite pity of God upon them!"

"You ought not to take on like that, little master! Vassili Andrejewitch says you are the luckiest dog he ever heard of, *to be saved*. And I must not forget. He said for you to say nothing, and on no account leave your estate for an instant."

Ah, here was the object of the message! A second time Schukowsky had acted swiftly to save him. How noble was the heart of Schukowsky.

"What became of the leaders?"

"You mean Ryleiev, the brothers Mouravieff-Apostol, Bestushew, Pestel, Kakhovsky, and the rest? They were thrown into the dungeons. More than a thousand others were arrested."

"Prince Troubetzkoi?"

"Oh! — he escaped. At least I think he did. I may be wrong. You see, he played double on both sides."

Alexis Sergiewitch shuddered. They would rot with filth. They would die of disease, hunger. They would be buried alive in the mines of Siberia. General Raevsky had been right in his parting words: "*Remember, whatever Alexander does, it is for your own good. It is to save you.*"

"It took a night and a day to haul away the dead bodies from the Square. They were frozen together in piles. They had to be beaten apart. Some of them had four arms and four legs they were beaten apart in such haste. And some did n't have any legs

and arms. But they could n't haul away all the snow! So that stayed red."

Alexis Sergiewitch, with his poet's visualizing power, saw it all, in its gruesome details. He suffered. He suffered from head to foot.

"I'm pretty sure, *now*, that Troubetzkoi did get off, some way — I think he ran and hid. No one saw hair or hide of him!

"Nicholas wanted to pardon as many of the nobility as he could — if he could find any excuse at all. And that reminds me. You know the father of the brothers Mouravieff-Apostol lives abroad somewhere. Well, he was an intimate friend of all the imperial family. Nicholas wanted to help his boys for love of the father. He summoned one of them."

"Which one?"

"I — I — can't tell —"

"Think a minute!"

"No — *no* — I *know* I can't tell."

"Go on!"

"Well — Nicholas questioned him. If he would tell about the plot, and name the other conspirators, Nicholas would have set him free, because he loved his father so."

"Well! *Well?*" broke in Pushkin nervously.

"Well — he questioned him."

"I know, *I know!* You said so before."

"So I did."

"Go on — *go on* — I tell you!"

"He would n't answer. He would n't say one word, *not even to save himself.* Nicholas lost patience. He declared: '*I am master of your life.*' Mouravieff-Apostol replied: '*To me you are only the son of a bastard!*' Then Nicholas flew at him. He kicked him almost to death. He broke his bones. He would have killed him on the spot, but Count Benkendorf, who happened to be in the next room listening at the door, rushed in and pulled him away. That saved him, *for the moment.*"

Alexis Sergiewitch slipped down in his chair and groaned. Arína Rodiónovna feared that he was going to faint.

"Before I came away, some of them — *in the dungeons* — went mad. Some strangled themselves to death with pieces of their clothing. And they are still making arrests! All the prisons are full — all the dungeons. Some say the leaders are to be quartered alive. But not one of them would buy life by telling on the others!"

Some divine providence evidently watched over his own good-for-nothing days, while they who were braver met death, torture. Agony, like a fiery breath, enveloped him. He had never suffered so acutely in his life.

He heard but vaguely the monotonous voice of Schukowsky's servant saying: "I 've got to move on. I have another errand to do for Vassili Andrejewitch, over there, in the village" — turning his head toward the window and looking out. "It won't be light much longer." He was pulling on his greatcoat, tying the long, fringed, red-and-gray muffler around and around his neck, beating his snowy, frozen mittens against the stove where they still steamed. Soon there was a sharp jangle of little bells outside. He was gone.

Alexis Sergiewitch sat like one stunned. His mind reverted to that last night in Petersburg, and the meeting in the house of Ryleiev that looked out on the Blue Bridge. That was an ill-starred night, *and year*, for many. But he had not really believed that they were serious. Then he recalled with quick joy, which he smothered in quicker shame, the letter he had written at dawn the next day to Ryleiev, refusing to join the society. Schukowsky came then and urged him to write another letter saying the same thing. This probably had purchased his safety. They who had been fearless, who had honorably stood by their beliefs, were to die, in torture, disgrace, while he — *the* — yes, he could not withhold the honest self-confession, nor the word — yes, he, the butterfly, *the coward*, had escaped.

Again he had one of those brief, periodical, mental awakenings, whose pain it seemed increased each time, in which he saw, for a second, life as he should have lived it. This made him melancholy. But, strange to say, it gave him no help toward directing the future. For the moment he saw how wild, how disordered,

his life had been. And it had been lived only for pleasure, never for any great ideal.

But he did not take into consideration, because it was impossible, the changes that had been going on in Russia during these years of exile. While he had been traveling in the South, in Bessarabia, in Crimea, in the Caucasus, he had been out of touch with Petersburg and Petersburg thought. He had forgotten his revolutionary companions of that spring night so long ago. He did not know what they had been plotting nor how they had progressed. He had been occupied differently. He had been occupied with the eternal things of nature in a land where nature is both grand and lovely, instead of with the passing fads of man. He did not realize with what rapidity the revolutionary faith of his friends had penetrated and spread among the people. In addition, it was a characteristic of his mind to look upon all things lightly except art. With him, unconsciously, art and life had been changing places. Art, the fictitious, the unreal, was to him the real. Here he moved happily, bravely. Life he could not see. He approached it undeftly, or only to disturb. Besides, he had the eminently un-Russian characteristic of not caring greatly for social problems. He knew now that he had looked down upon these boyish friends of his as inaugurating merely a new social fashion. If they had influenced him for a moment, it was because he was so infinitely interested, *but only for a little while*, in everything. Interest with him, too, frequently meant keeping up with what was going on. His inability to believe any one definite thing was as great as his interest. He had no inclination to try to improve life. To him that was a vulgarity. The people who did that were prosaic people. He merely wished to picture life, be it good or bad, to look out upon it and feel joy.

He realized how far he had been from being one of them. His brief association with the brilliant young Decembrists was because some of them were poets like himself, and young, merely one of his transient emotions. He was a beauty-lover, a sybarite. His revolutionaryism, his feebly boasted modernism, he reserved for art. He was inclined to be conservative as regards opinions political. He liked too well the picture of the old, aristocratic

ideal that was passing. He felt a peculiar combination of hatred and contempt for the shop-keeping middle class so rapidly developing.

They, his old Petersburg companions, who were suffering in dungeons now, or perhaps dead, lived for an ideal in some far future. With them the present did not count. With him it was the only thing that did count. They, perhaps, were the first heralds of the future, where he doubted if he would like to live. He was not sure whether he cared very much about laws anyway, be they good or bad. He looked upon them as a sort of disagreeable way in which people who could not write, like him, amused themselves.

Then he began to suffer differently. The torturing complexity of consciousness which is characteristic of the artist's mind, and usually helps to destroy its owner's happiness, became uppermost.

Alexander had understood him better than he had understood himself. He was not worth being taken seriously. The thing to do with him was to put him on a shelf somewhere, in safety, out of the way. Then he thought of his writing dismally, as merely the record of a vagabond's days. But he had loved it so, this pleasant kaleidoscopic picture world, that had floated past his eyes in his travels!

Night had overtaken his sad meditating. He had not seen it coming. Arína Rodiónovna entered bringing candles. A servant was right behind her with others.

"*My pet — my lamb*, do not feel so bad! You were not one of the conspirators. There is no reason for you to blame yourself. A slice of bread cut off is not a part of the loaf, is it?" — setting the two candles upon his reading-table, and pulling the curtains to cover the cold night outside.

"Every one has to fold his mantle according to the wind, does he not? *My darling* — you lack faith — faith in yourself, to be bravely what God made you. Faith is made to live with as well as to die with," she added sagely.

When the evening meal was laid and the warm room enlivened with the sparkling dots of candles' flame, she coaxed him to the table. But he could not eat.

"No, nurse, I'm a coward, a miserable coward who lacked the courage to die with the others. I was there, *that night!*"

"The shock has unsettled your nerves, my lamb. That is all. A man who is ill has no stomach for life any more than for food. What is man without a stomach? And no wonder — after these years of exile, driven from place to place — no freedom."

When late night came she could not coax him to bed. He still sat in the big green rep chair of the worn arms, by the window, half stunned with the tragic news, and his own bitter self-revelation. The old woman took up her bedtime candle, made the sign of the cross over him, and said good-night.

CHAPTER XXVII

PRINCE METTERNICH'S LETTER

The news of the death of Alexander reached Prince Metternich very speedily by way of Warsaw, as speedily, indeed, as it reached Petersburg. He had been awaiting decisive news of some kind from Taganrog with something as nearly approaching nervous suspense as was possible with his disciplined German temperament and long diplomatic training. Whatever that news might happen to be, it would be of weighty moment to him and to the development of his future policy of statecraft. For a long time whenever he thought of Russia he had quoted Shakespeare with deep sincerity: "*Aye, there's the rub!*"

Now the die was cast. Whoever ruled, Nicholas or Constantine, he knew them both to be autocrats by conviction and training, and this was a source of strength and promise to him. No more uncertainty. No more vacillation, from that huge, torpid, polar bear Russia, just awakening to dangerous activity from the sleep of centuries.

At once he wrote to Châli, not in cipher, but in free and open hand for any one to read, thereby disclaiming culpability or too great interest in the recent eventful affair in Taganrog, knowing well that no one was more skillful than the woman he addressed in sifting out carefully the exact meaning intended for her alone. His letter showed that astonishing commingling of seriousness and frivolity which he knew so well how to command. He passed easily, as was his habit, from matters of state to love without any appreciable lack of harmony. He wrote:

As usual I have reason to be pleased with you, my Châli, and in more ways than one. You have understood in a brief time, better than I thought it would be possible, that in whatever moves the Russian mind there must be a combination of the sentimental and the religious.

As cold-blooded as I am, the sudden death of Alexander shook me. He was once my friend. But I could not follow him in friendship and

contemplate thereby the coming wreck of what little of our old civilization the French Revolution has left untouched.

Yet I should not be shocked at the death of Alexander. The heart, the soul of him, died long ago. They died when he gave up the glorious dreams of his youth to attempt compromises which were impossible. One may not serve, *at the same time*, both God and Cæsar.

With him, if I do not err greatly, the youth of Russia is over. Now its manhood will begin. My one-time powerful friends of long ago — or enemies, as you may wish — are leaving me alone to grow old without them. Napoleon is gone, and Talleyrand; Richelieu, too, and the Duc de Berry, to mention only a few. And now, *Alexander!* I seem, indeed, to lead a charmed life. I *survived* Napoleon, it would be truthful to say. I have outlived Alexander. And now I am trying to live through the destructive foreign policy of that English arch-fiend, Canning. I feel sometimes that I am alone in the midst of a crazy world.

The greatest of these crazy ones is Canning. And because of him, my Châli, you must prepare to go North at once. Would to Heaven it were possible to bid you come to me! I must still live on for a while, I suppose, upon the stored-up memory of the happiness of our last meeting by Lake Garda.

So I will think of you soon, setting out across the hyperborean splendor of the forests and the frosts of the North. First, to Moscow. Remain there for the coronation. From Moscow go on to Petersburg to be present at the first winter of the new Court. I have already instructed our ambassador there, Count Fiquelmont, to find you a suitable residence and to arrange for your presentation to the social *élite*.

You see, Canning will leave no stone unturned to win over the new Emperor, whoever he may be, and the Court circle, to the side of England. He will send his most powerful diplomatists. That is why I wish you to be there, too, beautiful, brilliant, gorgeously gowned. You see, I could not fail to have you there! I must not lose any chance to array Russian influence on my side. My son, Victor, may, too, in case his health should permit, go on to observe the installation of a Court.

You have heard, of course, of the revolutionary outbreak in Petersburg. That outbreak, if I mistake not, has deep and widespread ramifications, threatening to undermine all Russian life.

Nicholas behaved very creditably on that difficult occasion. Nicholas can be depended upon! Count Woronzow, of whom you spoke in your last letter, is a very worthy Russian. You can rely upon what he says. You will probably meet sometime, perhaps in Peter, that wild, hair-brained, negro poet, Pushkin. If even half I have heard of him is

true, there is something of the blackness of the jungle still lurking in his heart. But he *is* a poet! Many irregularities may be forgiven on that score. "*Little Nesselrode,*" at present Minister for Foreign Affairs, *probably,* will hold an important place in the new Cabinet. He has ability. As I told you when I met you by Lake Garda, you are sure to play havoc with the hearts of those blond, pale Russians.

My greatest grief in life just now is Canning. He is trying to check my Russian policy at every turn. And you cannot put your finger upon Canning any more than upon a flea. It is all the result of his Irish blood! The caprices, the senseless fervors, the fleeting likes, the reasonless dislikes, the complex intrigues, the ill-timed wit, the sudden swerving from an agreed-upon act, caused in his nature by Irish blood! This makes him dangerous to Europe now. Did you know, my dear, that he is the one man whom not even Lawrence could paint sympathetically? That tells the story!

Have you heard what he has done? He has acknowledged the independence from Spain and Portugal of the Colonies of South America. A most unwise act at this time!

Revolution is rife in the world. And he is encouraging — *socially* — in London those disagreeable, ill-bred North Americans, because they can say in the drawing-rooms, the salons, things that it would be impolite or impolitic for him to say.

In the Irish, my dear, there is a quality similar to the gypsy, something that no one can ever reckon with nor rely upon. A drop of Irish blood in a man is like a drop of yeast in mixing. It makes everything foam over. It produces a ferment.

My one comfort, *politically,* has been my Imperial Master. Europe has been witness of the care, of the efforts, with which he has constantly met the torrent of disorganization advancing now so rapidly over peoples, over empires.

I cannot tell you how I have longed for you this autumn. We had a lovely warm, golden autumn in Vienna. I spent much of it out of doors among my flowers which I love better than politics.

Now my outdoor garden flowers are gone, the orchids you brought me from Africa are beginning to bloom. They hang upon my wall. One of them, the one with a mouth that is luscious and red, reminds me of you. Be assured that my regret is great that this long journey takes you away from me instead of toward me, longing as I do daily for your presence.

CLEMENT
Manu propria *Prince Metternich*

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE PENITENT

YEARS later.

Summer over sparsely settled Siberia. Here summer means space, sunlight, silence, and the blowing of great winds over pale, blond fields of Northern grain, and scents of wild honey on the air.

Along the rough, narrow, ill-kept roads, driving slowly in home-made, awkward wooden carts with heavy, creaking wheels, come country people, poorly dressed. They are coming from all directions. They come from great distances. They come like pilgrims upon a quest.

Some from the far northeast, through the mighty, frowning forests, which grow rich, black here, and impenetrable upon rotting bog lands, where at high noon the air is chill and wet.

Some come from the lake region, where restless water-birds rustle the reeds, and unsuspectedly long blue levels shine, and haze floats like mirage.

Some come from still farther away, from the lonely cattle country, from the uplands, from the banks of great hurrying or interminably placid rivers, whose distant, unseen destinations keep an inscrutable charm.

But they are all going to the same place. In their minds is the same thought; in their hearts the same hope. They are going to a little, low, wooden dwelling on the outskirts of Tomsk. They are talking of the miracles performed there by Kusmitch the Saint. Some, more intelligent than the others, and shaken with pain, are questioning wistfully: "If a man can give up self utterly, if he can live only for others, incorruptible and pure, lifted to heights of vision by faith, do you not think it possible that in compensation the power of healing might come? Are not the laws governing the world of mind exact like the laws of matter? There, too, is there not exact addition, exact subtraction?"

In the dooryard of the humble house of Tomsk, where grew gladly the larkspur, the gentle columbine, and gentian, for the last time, perhaps, the world was permitted to look upon the sovereignty of the spirit. Here, upon a rush-bottomed chair, sat Kusmitch the Monk. He was barefooted. He wore a rough robe girdled at the waist with a rope. With a tiny silver statue of the Christ in his hand, whereon was scratched dimly the letter "A," he healed and blessed the blind, the sick, the syphilitic, the twisted with pain, the worn with age, the worn with work and suffering. Brighter than the diamonds of his crown of old burned now the white fire of his spirit.

Through the warm days of the brief Siberian summer he sat here healing the sick, spilling the wealth of his heart, making rich with the treasures of the spirit, *giving, giving,* with no wish for return.

He had not grown older as men grow old with years. Some new, some indestructible youth had become his. He had changed, to be sure, but subtly. His face expressed superb peace. It was the face of one who had risen to a height where he could survey life, but where life could not vex nor grieve him.

All the past, all its sad, its tragic memories were melted, blended, made one, and then annihilated in the pure whiteness of the flame of impersonal love, of the bonfire of self. Around him spread the wild, inspiring breath of untrodden lands, where fresh, where unexhausted vigor dwells in the red earth.

Again mankind beheld a figure of divine beneficence, sitting amid the fields and the folds, blessing the poor, the aged, the suffering, making the hearts of children open to his love as the sunlight opens the flowers. He had found — *that other life.*

THE END

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 10029 727 2

CAPTAIN BLOOD

By Rafael Sabatini

The phenomenal success of "Scaramouche" proves that a fine type of historical novel is still one of the most popular forms of literature. Now it is followed by the story of the redoubtable Peter Blood, buccaneer par excellence, Captain of the great ship Arabella, terror of the Spaniard, and undisputed master of the waters of the Spanish Main.

In reading of how Peter Blood, condemned for high treason to slavery in Barbadoes, escaped on a captured Spanish ship, and of his sea fights and desperate adventures as a free-booter, many a blasé novel-reader will feel a thrill he has not experienced since boyhood dreams of buccaneers and pirate ships, Spanish gold and pieces of eight. The story has glamor and beauty, and it is told with an easy confidence. As for Blood himself, he is a superman, compounded of a sardonic humor, cold nerves, and hot temper. Both the story and the man are masterpieces. A great figure, a great epoch, a great story. Once again, and more emphatically than ever before, Mr. Sabatini proves that in his hands the historical romance can become the most supremely absorbing of all fiction.

Frontispiece in color by **N. C. WYETH.**

NEW FICTION

CAPTAIN BLOOD — **Rafael Sabatini**
A thrilling tale of buccaneers and high romance on the waters of the Spanish Main, by the author of "Scaramouche."

THE FIGHTING EDGE — **William MacLeod Raine**
How Bob Dillon makes a man of himself. A new novel by the author of "Man-Size."

THE PENITENT — **Edna Worthley Underwood**
A great historical novel. The scene is Russia of a hundred years ago.

FROM A BENCH IN OUR SQUARE — **Samuel Hopkins Adams**
A companion volume to "Our Square and the People in it."

BIG LAUREL — **Frederick Orin Bartlett**
A whirl of romance and adventure in the Southern mountains, by the author of "The Wall Street Girl," "The Triflers," etc.

A FUGITIVE MILLIONAIRE — **Anthony Carlyle**
A swift-moving, absorbing mystery story.

THE SWAN AND THE MULE — **Della MacLeod**
An intensely dramatic story of love, mystery, and dark magic.

BILL THE BACHELOR — **Denis Mackail**
This new novel by the author of "What Next?" and "Romance to the Rescue" fairly ripples with humor.

OVERLOOKED — **Maurice Baring**
A brilliant and unusual novel of cosmopolitan Europe.

WITCH DOCTORS — **Charles Beadle**
A fascinating romance of the African jungle.

PENDER AMONG THE RESIDENTS — **Forrest Reid**
Shows at its best the fantastic power of this Ulster novelist, the author of "Pirates of the Spring," "The Spring Song," etc.

THE CUCKOO'S NEST — **Christine Jope Slade**
Society and bohemian life in present-day London is pictured in this sprightly and intriguing story of youth and love.

THE BANNER OF THE BULL — **Rafael Sabatini**
An exciting story of the romantic career of Cæsar Borgia. *New Edition.*

THE SNARE — **Rafael Sabatini**
A story of the Napoleonic Wars. *New Edition.*